How to shop like an insider on your next grocery run

Industry veteran dishes tips to help you save money and make trips more efficient. **In Money**

Steelers may feel pressure to keep 4 quarterbacks

Drew Allar and Will Howard give Pittsburgh reason to have unorthodox roster. **In Sports**

CAITLIN OCHS/REUTERS

Panettiere, 'Heroes' and 'Nashville' star, dies

Actress, whose prolific career in TV and film began when she was a baby, was vocal about addiction and childhood fame. She was 36. **In Life**

USA TODAY

THE NATION'S NEWS | $3 | TUESDAY, AUGUST 18, 2026

Dems pin their hopes on Alaska

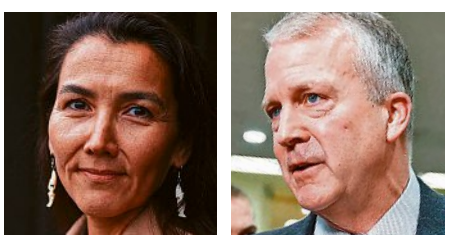
Senate candidate aims to unseat GOP opponent

Emily R. Condon
USA TODAY

Mary Peltola is an Alaskan, a Democrat, a former member of Congress, and by recent polls, the leading candidate in the Alaska Senate race – a state President Donald Trump carried three times.

Peltola is vying to oust incumbent Sen. Dan Sullivan from his Senate seat, and the polls say she has a chance in November. An Alaska Survey Research poll Aug. 11 reported that Peltola held a 1.6 percentage point edge over Sullivan. A New York Times/Siena poll in late June put Sullivan 2 points ahead, and an Alaska Survey Research poll in April gave Peltola a 7-point lead.

Democrats hope to flip the seat in the midterms to shrink – or take over – the Republican majority in Congress' upper chamber.



Democrats believe Mary Peltola, an Alaska Native, has a good chance to flip the Senate seat held by Republican Dan Sullivan in November.

On Tuesday, Aug. 18, Alaska voters will head to the poll in nonpartisan primaries – a relatively newer system in the state, enacted when voters passed a ballot initiative in 2020. The top four contenders, which Peltola and Sullivan are almost sure to be among, will head to the general election in November, where ranked-choice voting is used.

Political analyst Kyle Kondik of the Center for Politics said that with the state's Republican lean shrinking under Trump and Peltola's overperformance in 2024 (meaning she got more votes than former Vice President Kamala Harris, the Democrat atop the ticket), the seat is a now a toss-up.

Fourteen other candidates are on the primary ballot, including another man by the name of Dan Sullivan, who will remain on the ballot after a federal judge and the Alaska Supreme Court ruled against requests by Sen. Dan Sullivan's team to remove it.

An Alaska Survey Research poll in March showed Sullivan and Peltola leading the remaining candidates by huge margins. Independent Sid Hill brought in 3.3% of the projected primary vote, followed by Republican James Ryan at 2.9%.

Peltola is not new to running for Congress: She won two elections in

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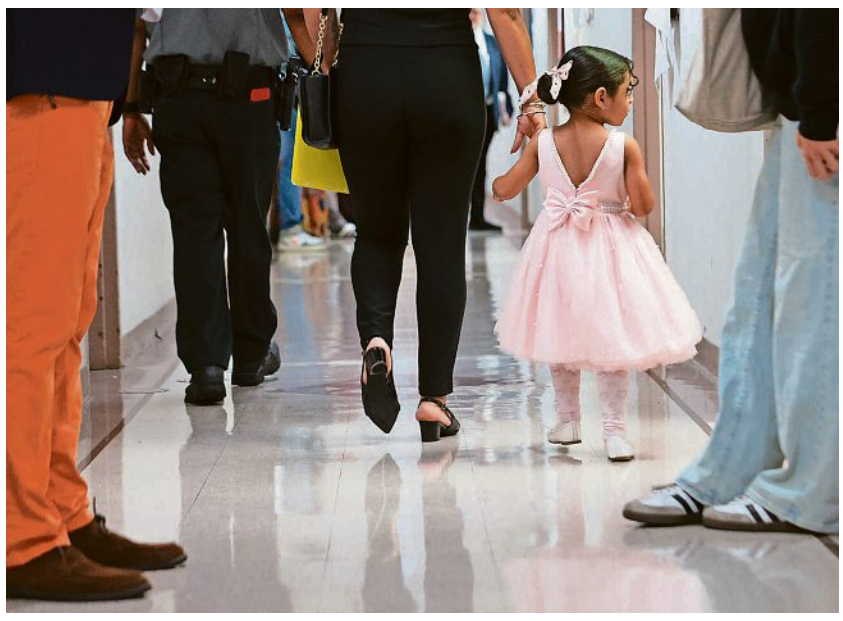
Immigration cases sped through court

People wait for their hearing in immigration court at the Jacob K. Javits Federal Building on June 24 in New York City. PHOTOS BY MICHAEL M. SANTIAGO/GETTY IMAGES

Critics say rushed 'mega' hearings slash due process



"Mega master" hearings – which pack 50 to 100 cases into a single proceeding – are meant to trim the backlog of cases in immigration courts run by the Department of Justice, federal officials say.

Christopher Cann, Isabelle Foland and Mary Ann Koruth
USA TODAY NETWORK

Lines stretched out the front doors of courthouses. Overflow seating set up in hallways. Classroom-style exchanges, with judges asking people to raise their hands in response to generic questions about their cases.

These are some of the scenes playing out in courts across the country as the Trump administration increasingly turns to mass hearings to push more cases through the cumbersome immigration system.

These so-called "mega master" hearings – which pack 50 to 100 cases into a single proceeding – are meant to trim the large backlog of cases in immigration courts run by the Department of Justice, federal officials say. Critics argue the effort slashes the already limited due process that immigrants receive, giving them less meaningful time before a judge.

The hearings, which have ticked up since May, come as detentions

See HEARINGS, Page 4A

> **"Whenever you have a high volume of anything in any field, it leaves a possibility for error because of fatigue [and] because of the repetitive nature of what you're reviewing."**
>
> **Elizabeth Treacy**
> Former immigration judge

Raul Fuentes shovels snow off of his front steps during a snow storm on Jan. 15 in South Bend, Indiana.
MICHAEL CLUBB/USA TODAY NETWORK

Vital Southwest reservoir drops to lowest level ever

Lake Powell, on Utah-Arizona border, helps powers millions of homes. **2A**

El Niño, polar vortex set stage for chaotic winter

Scientists don't exactly know how they interact

Doyle Rice and Dinah Voyles Pulver
USA TODAY

It's still summer, but a potent El Niño is taking center stage, and meteorologists and scientists are looking ahead to what that might mean for the nation's winter weather.

El Niño can have a number of effects on winter weather in the United States. It tends to lead to wetter-than-average conditions across the South and less snow around the Great Lakes, interior New England and Pacific Northwest. But its effects could be particularly noticeable this year.

The El Niño developing along the equator in the Pacific is forecast to be "very strong," possibly among the strongest in modern record, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Stronger El Niño events tend to have greater interactions with other strong planetary climate forces and bring surprises to winter weather, scientists say.

The end result: El Niño's record-breaking force could enter a chaotic dance with another wintertime powerhouse: the polar vortex.

See WINTER, Page 2A

Lala leaves flooding across Hawaii

Tropical storm tracks away as hazards linger

Thao Nguyen, Karina Zaiets, Christopher Cann and Dinah Voyles Pulver
USA TODAY

Residents and emergency crews across Hawaii were assessing damage and clearing debris as Tropical Storm Lala moved away from the islands after leaving widespread power outages and flooding in its wake.

The storm weakened from a Category 1 hurricane to a tropical storm Aug. 16 as it tracked west away from Hawaii. But forecasters and officials warned hazards would linger. At least 100 homes were destroyed or lost in the storm as floodwaters inundated communities.

The National Hurricane Center discontinued tropical storm warnings for Maui County and Oahu, leaving Kauai County as the only area under a tropical storm warning on Aug. 17. Forecasters said the storm could strengthen again and regain hurricane status this week as it moves west across the Central Pacific.

About 5 p.m. local time Aug. 15, Lala's eyewall brushed along the south side of the Big Island, the hurricane center said. At its closest point, Lala's center was about 35 miles off South Point, Hawaii, for about three hours. Although meteorologists said Lala did not officially make landfall in Hawaii, it was felt throughout the island chain.

Flooding, mudslides and hazardous surf remain concerns. Forecasters warned additional rainfall and saturated ground could prolong the dangers, and large swells generated by Lala were expected to fuel dangerous surf and rip current conditions.

More than 3 feet of rain

Total rainfall over the islands "has been extreme," the National Weather Service in Honolulu said late Aug. 16. The greatest rainfall numbers were along the windward side of the Big Island, where 20 to 40 inches of rain was reported, according to Patrick Blood of the weather service.

The highest recorded total rainfall – 43.54 inches – occurred at Laupahoehoe on the island's northeast coast. Most of that was recorded between the afternoons of Aug. 15 and 16. Elsewhere, at least 10 to 15 inches was reported in Maui, 5 to 10 inches in Molokai, Lanai and Oahu, and 10 to 15 inches in Kauai, the weather service said.

Flood watches, power outages

By early Aug. 17, most of the rain had departed, but flood advisories remained active throughout the islands of Kauai, Niihau, Oahu, Lanai, Molokai and Kahoolawe, the weather service said.

More than 126,000 homes and businesses were without power early Aug. 17, according to Hawaiian Electric, the utility company serving much of the island chain. More than 64,000 customers on Oahu, 41,000 on the Big Island and almost 9,000 on Maui remained in the dark just after midnight Aug. 17, the utility said.

"Customers on Hawaii Island are being asked to prepare for extended outages in the hardest hit rural areas of the island," the company said in a statement.

Several main transmission lines were damaged on Hawaii Island, Maui and Oahu, Hawaiian Electric said. It noted some transmission lines cross remote terrain and mountainous areas, "making repairs challenging and lengthy."

Hawaii officials said Aug. 16 that no storm-related deaths had been reported, "and we pray that remains true," Hawaii County Mayor Kimo Alameda said at a news conference.

Lake Powell falls to record low as long-term drought worsens

Reservoir helps power millions of homes

Trevor Hughes
USA TODAY

Low water levels in Lake Powell are apparent in this February image showing the end of a floating dock hanging off a cliff at Antelope Point Marina in Page, Arizona. TREVOR HUGHES/USA TODAY

Lake Powell, the giant reservoir on the Utah-Arizona border that helps power millions of homes, has fallen to its lowest level ever amid a worsening Western drought exacerbated by climate change.

The lake's surface dropped to 3,519.91 feet above sea level Aug. 15, according to the Bureau of Reclamation's automated gauge system. The previous low was 3,519.92 feet, reached in April 2023. Dropping below 3,490 feet could imperil the lake's ability to generate electricity, and federal officials have been pulling water out of smaller reservoirs upstream to help delay reaching that level.

Nevertheless, the lake could fall close to that level, known as minimum power pool, early next spring, according to federal predictions. Further drops could take the lake to what's known as "dead pool," where it's too low to flow downstream. That could spark draconian cuts to how much drinking water is available for millions of people and imperil farms 500 miles away in California's Imperial Valley.

The lake's level is recorded daily by automated gauges, and the Bureau of Reclamation cautions that readings could be later revised. But the lake has been on a downward trajectory for months and was widely expected to reach this mark around mid-August.

Drought has complicated management of Lake Powell and Lake Mead outside Las Vegas. Lake Mead fell to its lowest level ever on Aug. 7 and is now setting a new record low daily. The Lake Powell area draws an estimated 4 million recreation visitors a year to houseboat, water-ski and kayak on the lake and enjoy its scenic side canyons, along with the Rainbow Bridge rock arch.

Climatologists and other water supply experts say a long-term drought is being exacerbated by climate change, which is altering how much snow falls in the Rocky Mountains before melting into the Colorado River.

The West is warming faster than the country overall, which ultimately means less water available for farmers, businesses and residents, Peter Goble, assistant state climatologist for Colorado, told USA TODAY earlier this year.

"There's no way to look at the numbers and think the Colorado River is doing well right now," Goble said. "In a world that's warmer, all signs point to droughts that will be more intense and more frequent."

In June, Aaron Weiss, executive director of the Center for Western Priorities, told USA TODAY the fixes will be "both really hard and really urgent."

In addition to limiting lawn irrigation and paying farmers to use less water, some proposals to protect Powell and Mead call for piping water from the Mississippi River into Arizona, hauling icebergs from the polar regions or building nuclear-powered desalination plants off the California coast.

Several environmental groups have proposed removing or entirely bypassing the Glen Canyon Dam, draining what's left into Lake Mead, and implementing stricter water conservation measures.

The two reservoirs provide hydroelectricity, drinking and irrigation water to millions of Americans across the West by storing up the Colorado River. The only time they have ever been this low was when they were first being filled.

The river serves seven Western states, Native American tribes and two northern Mexican states with water for agriculture, irrigation and drinking, hydroelectricity, recreation and fish and wildlife habitat. The Glen Canyon Dam created Lake Powell, and the Hoover Dam created Lake Mead.

The Powell-Mead reservoir system was designed to store water during extra-wet years and release it during dry years. But long-term trends mean less snow is falling on the Colorado Rockies. Complicating matters, rapid growth of the West – possible in large part because of the reservoirs – has placed extra demand on the system.

A federal plan released last month calls for significantly reducing the amount of water flowing out of Lake Mead, which would make it harder for farmers in California and Arizona to irrigate their crops and might require additional water-saving measures in many cities.

Winter

Continued from Page 1A

What is the polar vortex?

The polar vortex is a wintertime phenomenon, a large area of cold air high up in our atmosphere that normally spins over the North and South poles (as its name suggests). The vortexes over both the Arctic and Antarctic form in the fall when temperatures begin to cool.

The polar vortex above the Arctic is linked to the jet stream. Both can be impacted by El Niño, and bring about changes in our weather patterns, said Darryn Waugh, a professor in Earth and Planetary Sciences at Johns Hopkins University.

When El Niño meets polar vortex

El Niño drives changes in the high- and low-pressure patterns in the troposphere, the lowest layer of Earth's atmosphere where weather happens, said Amy Butler, a physicist at NOAA's Chemical Sciences Laboratory.

The strength of the polar vortex is vulnerable to the large ridges and troughs that form in lower levels of the atmosphere and influence how the jet stream moves. When it gets disrupted, it can help funnel unspeakably cold air into locations in the eastern United States. Changes in the patterns can also influence precipitation.

Generally, a strong polar vortex is good news for winter weather haters out there. A weak polar vortex, conversely, often means cold air can funnel south from the Arctic into the central and eastern United States.

Scientists do not yet fully understand the relationship between El Niño and the polar vortex, said Judah Cohen, a polar vortex expert at MIT. The science is still uncertain on how the patterns interact and the relationships between the patterns aren't particularly strong, Cohen said.

El Niño tends to weaken the vortex in mid-to-late winter and can increase the chances for sudden warming events in the stratosphere, Butler told USA TODAY in a recent email. The sudden warming has a downward impact on the surface that can last for several weeks, Butler said. These impacts reinforce surface temperatures and weather patterns over the United States and Europe.

Winter impacts uncertain

Scientists can't say definitively at this point exactly which regions of the United States might be influenced by El Niño's dance with the polar vortex, the jet stream or the other patterns in the atmosphere.

They know that El Niño tends to cause more of the waves that disrupt normal weather patterns and weaken the polar vortex.

If the polar vortex remains strong this winter, it will be an overall mild winter, regardless of El Niño, except possibly along the West Coast, Cohen said.

But if a weaker polar vortex buffeted by El Niño's influence is associated with sudden warming in the stratosphere, Cohen said it could bring a repeat of events such as the severe winter weather in the Mid-Atlantic in 2019-2020.

El Niño's effect on winter weather also is associated with other global patterns that can bring influence regional weather patterns in the United States.

Winter impacts uncertain

Specifics about which regions of the country could see the coldest, driest or snowiest weather remain hard to pin down. In some cases scientists can say with confidence that when one thing happens, another thing always happens, Waugh said. That is not the case with the interactions among the jet stream, the stratospheric polar vortex and El Niño. "It's when this happens, there's an increased probability that something will happen."

The other point scientists are raising is that if this El Niño indeed proves to be historically strong, its effects on the larger atmosphere remain a big question mark, said Ben Kirtman, dean of the Rosenstiel School of Marine, Atmospheric and Earth Science at the University of Miami.

"This is an El Niño superimposed on top of a pretty big climate change signal," Kirtman said. "We don't have a clear understanding how that changes the teleconnections, those relationships. That's an open science question."

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Trump appeal in Carroll case is denied

Justices strike down president's second effort

Maureen Groppe
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – The Supreme Court rejected for the second time an effort by President Donald Trump to avoid paying more than $5.6 million to writer E. Jean Carroll for sexually abusing and defaming her.

The court on Aug. 17 declined to reconsider Trump's appeal of a 2023 jury verdict in a civil suit brought by Carroll.

Trump had to pay Carroll the $5 million judgment plus interest after the court first rejected his appeal on June 29.

His lawyers fought the payment, arguing he deserved a chance to ask the Supreme Court to reconsider his request.

It's rare for litigants to ask for a second look and even rarer for the court to grant one.

Trump's lawyers said reconsideration was warranted because the case is connected to another appeal involving Carroll that they have asked the Supreme Court to hear.

In that case, a Manhattan civil jury awarded Carroll $83.3 million from Trump in 2024 based on the conclusion that Trump defamed her in 2019 when he first denied her allegations.

Trump's lawyers have argued he should have immunity for his 2019 comments because he made them while serving as president.

"That use of official Presidential statements matters, because this Court has made clear that official Presidential acts may not be used as evidence to impose liability for other conduct," his lawyers told the justices, referencing the court's 2024 ruling that presidents can't be criminally prosecuted for "official" acts taken by a president.

Trump's statements were used against him in both trials, but Trump's lawyers did not raise the immunity issue in their appeal of the first judgement. His lawyers said they focused on other arguments because the Supreme Court had not yet issued its 2024 decision about presidential immunity.

The court did not explain its reasons for again rejecting that appeal.

The dispute started in 2019 when Carroll said that Trump sexually assaulted her at a New York City department store in 1996. Trump fired back with allegations that she was making up the story to sell her book.

Carroll sued him months later, winning the $83.3 million judgment.

As the case was ongoing, Trump repeated the denial in a social media post in 2022. Carroll then sued Trump again under a special window of time that New York granted to sexual abuse survivors, and in 2023, a New York jury found Trump liable for sexual abuse. That resulted in the $5 million verdict.

Alaska

Continued from Page 1A

2022 to be Alaska's sole member of the House of Representatives. First she won a special election to serve temporarily after the death of Republican Rep. Don Young. Then she won the 2022 general election but lost by 2.4 percentage points to now-Rep. Nicholas Begich, a Republican, in 2024. Trump carried Alaska by just over 13 points in that same election.

A Democrat, but 'a different type of Democrat'

As a Yup'ik Alaska Native, Peltola was the first Alaska Native member of Congress and first woman representing the state in the House. She would be the first Alaska Native to serve in the Senate if she won this fall. Her campaign centers on some typical Democratic talking points like "affordability," but she also tacks to the center by supporting Alaskan fisheries and oil and gas drilling in the state rather than calling to restrict them for environmental reasons.

"She is a Democrat, but she's sort of a different type of Democrat than sort of the national profile of Democrats because she supports energy projects here and oftentimes kind of connects herself to Don Young, who was our 50-year representative in the state, and he was a Republican," Brandon Boylan, a political science professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, told USA TODAY.

Joseph Warren, a political scientist at the University of Alaska, Anchorage, echoed that same sentiment, saying Peltola "separated herself from the national brand" of Democrats.

"She also has spoken very strongly on issues in Alaska like fisheries that don't really map onto conventional ideological categories in the Lower 48," Warren said.

Peltola's campaign championed her as "someone who will fix the rigged system in DC, lower costs, and put Alaska first" in a statement to USA TODAY, but Sen. Dan Sullivan's campaign spokesperson, Nate Adams, slammed her never having "got a single bill signed into law" when she served in Congress.

"The choice is clear, and Alaskans made their choice about Mary Peltola two years ago when they fired her," Adams said.

Warren predicted that Sullivan is "more likely to win than not" because the state tends to vote for Republicans and Sullivan is a fairly typical Alaska Republican. Incumbents also tend to have an upper hand.

Alaska doesn't always vote Republican

Sullivan's 2014 win ousted Democratic former Sen. Mark Begich, who served only one term. The state's other Senate seat has been held by Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski since 2002.

"Of course, Alaska votes Republican consistently in presidential elections, and that makes it seem like a much more conservative state than it actually is," Warren said.

Murkowski is Republican, but she is known to break ranks with her party. In August, she voted against confirming Trump's nomination for attorney general, Todd Blanche. In her reelection bid in 2010, Murkowski lost the Republican primary (the state still had partisan primaries at this time) to another Republican, Joe Miller, but she ultimately won the general election as a write-in candidate.

"There's a reason why Lisa Murkowski is a moderate Republican in this state that frequently challenges Trump," Boylan said.

Boylan called Peltola's brand of Democrat "Alaska contextualized" and said the state has a "strong libertarian spirit," referring to the small-government ideology.

"Many Alaskans are willing to overlook the party affiliation for the community connections and engagement" by candidates, Boylan told USA TODAY. "And that's why you sometimes see Democrats and independents win in these elections."

LaVon Ihrig, an Alaska voter, shared a similar sentiment with USA TODAY.

"In talks with family and friends, world news is not really affecting Alaskans' opinions at the poll, but instead what is affecting our paychecks and jobs here in Alaska," said Ihrig, 54, of Wasilla. "I know that is what I'm focused on, and I do not care about parties right now."

Ihrig said in a Facebook comment that she wants "to see new blood" and will not be voting for anyone who has held office before.

"Another reason people are leaning left is the price of gas, heating oil and natural gas," said Randi Baker, 39, an Alaska voter from Eagle River. "I personally just got a $500 settle-up bill from my natural-gas provider, and their excuse was that prices have gone up."

Alaska has the highest per capita energy expenses of any state because of its cold winters and the dispersed population needing to travel long distances, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Baker is a former Democrat, now independent. She said the only reason Alaska is Republican "is the oil companies and their employees and some of the military."

Boylan said the rising price of oil amid the Iran war contributes to Trump's low national approval rating – 40%, according to a Marquette Law School poll released Aug. 5 – and has major effects in Alaska.

An Alaska Survey Research poll reported in March that 36.3% of Alaska voters approved of Sullivan (another 17% were not sure), compared with a 38.1% Alaska approval rating of Trump in the same poll. About 52% of respondents said they voted for Trump in 2024.

"Alaskans, like a lot of Americans, are feeling rising cost of living and economic pinch, and economic factors are the dominant factors that influence elections," Boylan said. Sullivan is a staunch supporter of Trump, which could hurt the incumbent, he said.

Alaska Native organization has yet to endorse a candidate

The Alaska Native population makes up almost 16% of the state, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2020 data, and Peltola and Sullivan both have endorsements from Native Alaskan associations or groups.

Peltola's win in 2022 and Murkowski's 2010 write-in victory were largely a result of Alaska Federation of Natives endorsements, Warren said. The organization has yet to endorse a candidate in the 2026 Senate contest, and it could come after its October convention.

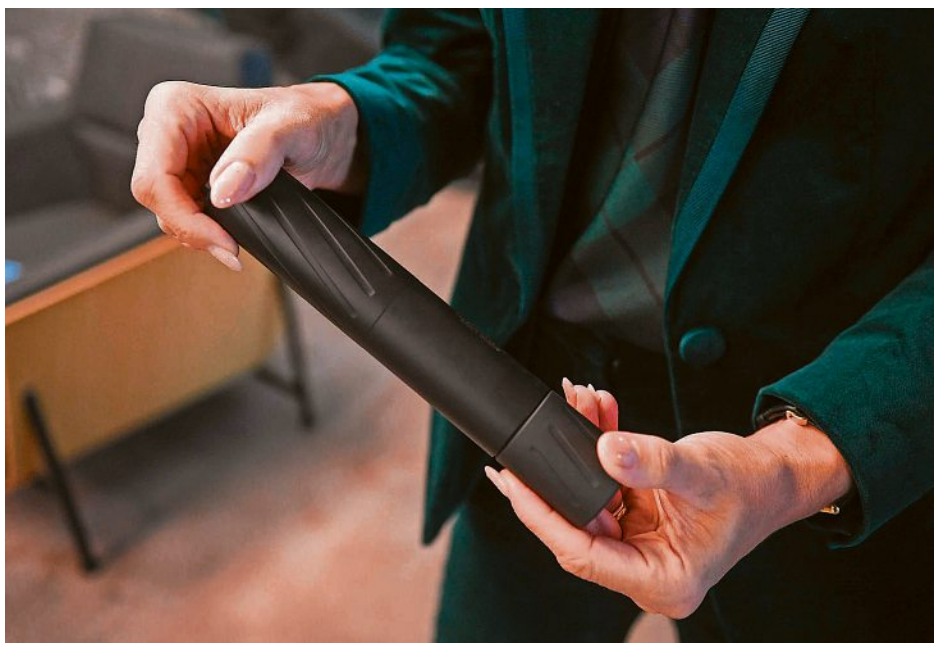
The organization is not "ideological in the sense of left or right," said Warren, who pointed to their endorsements of Democrats and Republicans alike. "They're supporting the interests of Alaska Natives and Bush, Alaska," an area where many Alaskan Natives live.

USA TODAY reached out to the Alaska Federation of Natives but did not hear back before publication.

Peltola is from Bethel in the Bush area of the state, and before her first stint in Congress, she was a leader in the communities as a Bethel City Council member and judge on the Orutsararmuit Native Council Tribal Court.

"She's a leader among Indigenous communities here in the state of Alaska," Boylan said.

"That said, I don't think that's enough. I think she has to campaign hard in all areas of the state."



Silencer Central in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, sells firearm sound suppressors, a detachable device that muffles the sound of a gunshot. Gun rights advocates are celebrating a ruling in Texas. SAMANTHA LAUREY/USA TODAY NETWORK

Texas ruling on silencers opens gun-rights loophole

Gun shop owners may face new confusion

Nick Penzenstadler
USA TODAY

A group of gun rights supporters gathered just after midnight on Aug. 13 to celebrate a victory and exploit a lapse in a firearms law that could signal a major shift in how the nation regulates the most dangerous guns and devices available.

Brandon Herrera, a 30-year-old YouTuber and Texas congressional candidate who bills himself as "the AK guy," bought an unregistered silencer, eliciting cheers from fellow enthusiasts at a shop in Leander, Texas.

Gun advocates have long decried the added layers of fees and regulation that apply to devices such as suppressors, or silencers that muffle the noise when a gun is fired. This week, a federal injunction took effect, invalidating a narrow portion of the law for the people who sued over it.

Backers of the challenge called the Aug. 5 injunction a "mortal wound" to the National Firearms Act, or NFA. A Texas federal judge stayed his ruling for a week, and, absent an appeal from the Trump administration, the ruling went into effect Aug. 13. The Department of Justice still has two months to appeal and lawyers have not signaled how they'll decide.

"It's not enough to play defense for our natural God-given, constitutionally guaranteed rights," Herrera said at Silencer Shop in Leander as he received the first unregistered suppressor from a gun shop in more than 90 years.

Kiersten Pels, a spokesperson for the DOJ, told USA TODAY, "The Department respects Americans' Second Amendment rights and is currently assessing the impact of the court's ruling."

The festive mood at the shop in Texas also kicked off a wave of confusion for gun shop owners nationwide. Many said they fielded calls asking about buying suppressors Aug. 13 and had to explain the narrow ruling.

The ruling only applies to plaintiffs in the case – but has gun safety advocates concerned it's sure to kick off a domino effect of challenges from around the country. Eight states and the District of Columbia have added restrictions banning the private use of silencers; however, silencers remain subject to the NFA restrictions in the other 42 states.

Firearms industry veteran Rob Pincus wrote on social media he wants to see more clarity from the DOJ or ATF about the impact of the Texas ruling. Some organizations have used the ruling as a membership drive since theoretically members or the litigators could be covered. Similarly, specific gun manufacturers that joined the suit, like Palmetto State Armory, are hoping to exploit the narrow ruling.

"This is a BIG Deal. ... It is progress... but, it is not at all clear exactly what has happened and there is no doubt things will be made more clear soon," Pincus wrote.

For decades, the National Firearms Act has required a special permit and payment of a $200 fee to obtain a tax stamp for each device. Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act tucked in a provision to lower the fee from $200 to $0. Applicants still must submit fingerprints, a passport-style photo and undergo an enhanced background check.

The Texas judge's injunction applies to silencers, short-barreled rifles and short-barreled shotguns. The named plaintiff in the case was Stephen Willeford, the man who confronted the mass shooter at a church in Sutherland Springs in 2017 with his own AR-15.

The suit was backed by the Gun Owners of America, which brands itself as a "no compromise" wing of the gun lobby. The organization has said for years it planned to "dismantle the NFA."

"We promised to keep fighting until these restrictions were gone, and now our members are putting the historic victory into action," said Erich Pratt, GOA's senior vice president. "The era of federal registration for unconstitutionally protected arms must end."

The law changes have prompted some to speculate whether fully automatic machine guns could become legal or more available. But those fall into an additional layer of regulation that would need further challenges. Rep. Jimmy Patronis, R-Florida, has proposed relaxing those regulations – with the backing of the GOA.

West Virginia and Kentucky have explored state-based registration for machine guns as a workaround.

Gun safety groups warn of law's erosion

Leading gun safety groups balked at the decision by the DOJ to let the law lapse.

"Less than a week after Senate Republicans confirmed Todd Blanche as attorney general, DOJ has failed to defend a 100-year-old public protection against some of our nation's deadliest weapons – even as it actively defends this exact same law in other courtrooms," John Feinblatt, president of Everytown for Gun Safety, said in a statement.

Contributing: Erin Mansfield, USA TODAY

Teen killed, four hurt in shooting in KY

Suspect arrested in Lexington park incident

Leo Bertucci and Christopher Cann
USA TODAY NETWORK
USA TODAY

Authorities arrested an 18-year-old suspect accused of carrying out a mass shooting at a public park in Lexington, Kentucky, that killed a teenager and injured four other people, police said.

Jametrius M. Griffin faces charges of murder, assault and tampering with evidence in connection with the shooting Aug. 15 at Charles Young Park in Lexington, the Lexington Police Department said.

It was not immediately clear if Griffin had obtained legal representation. Attempts to reach him were unsuccessful.

The Lexington Police Department first responded just before 7 p.m. ET to a report of shots fired during summer festivities at the park.

Authorities said a 4-year-old, a 14-year-old and two adults were among the injured. A fifth person, later identified by the Fayette County Coroner's Office as Di'Zhon Robertson, 16, died from a gunshot wound at a local hospital.

USA TODAY defines a mass shooting as an incident in which at least four people are struck by gunfire, even if there are no fatalities.

In a statement Aug. 16, Lexington Mayor Linda Gorton said the community would come together to pray for the wounded, the "young man we lost," and his family and friends. Several City Council members and officials with the One Lexington group against gun violence were at the park.

"We are more determined than ever to protect our young people, and to help them turn away from violence," the mayor said. "Through One Lexington, we are organizing a trauma support event, and will announce details soon."

Gov. Andy Beshear mentioned the shooting in a speech for a Kentucky Democratic Party dinner Aug. 15 at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Lexington.

"Let's think about the families of those that are involved. But having lost one of my closest friends in a shooting, let's not live in fear," Beshear said, referring to a shooting at the Old National Bank in Louisville in 2023 in which his friend Tommy Elliott was killed.

Charles Young Park hosted East End Day, a community event, Aug. 15. Devine Carama, director of One Lexington, said on Facebook that he was at the park at the time of the shooting.

"While trying to keep four young people covered and safe during the shooting, a person 8 inches from me was shot tonight," Camara wrote. "It's been 20 years since I've been that close to gunfire."

President Donald Trump disembarks Air Force One at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, on Aug. 16. KEN CEDENO/REUTERS

Trump threatens to bomb Oman over Iran deal

Joey Garrison
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump threatened military action against Oman, an ally of the United States, if its negotiations with Iran over the Strait of Hormuz interfere with efforts to reach a deal.

"If Oman gets in the way, we'll bomb the (expletive) out of them," Trump told Fox News in an Aug. 17 phone interview, according to Trey Yingst, the network's chief foreign correspondent who talked with the president.

Outside of talks with the United States, Iran has engaged in negotiations with Oman about reopening the Strait of Hormuz, which borders the two countries and both Iran and the United States have asserted control. But Iranian leaders have said it won't agree to a deal unless the United States meets certain conditions, including compensation for Tehran.

Trump has rejected that idea and defended the success of a U.S. naval blockade on Iranian ports that has sought to prevent Iranian ships from using the strait to transport oil. Trump said last week he's ready to soon declare the Strait of Hormuz a "territory of the United States."

Trump's latest remarks come as a 60-day window for the United States to negotiate with Iran – outlined in a memorandum of understanding in June – set to expire on Aug. 17. The memorandum was intended to give the two sides two more months to hammer out a peace deal, but the parameters of the preliminary agreement instead quickly fell apart, leaving no end in sight to a war that started in late February.

"Iran should wave the white flag of surrender," Trump told Fox News, according to Yingst. Trump also said, "I have no time schedule" and "I'm not in a hurry," even as the political fallout of the war in Iran is colliding with the November midterm elections.

With dimming prospects for a U.S-Iran deal to quickly emerge, Trump has repeatedly accused Iranian leaders of lying to him by saying one thing in their private negotiations and then the opposite in public.

The two sides dispute who controls the Strait of Hormuz, which about 20% of the world's crude oil and liquefied gas pass through as a critical access point for Middle East oil exports. Since the memorandum of understanding's unraveling, Iran has resumed attacks on ships in the strait that Iranian leaders say lack permission to access the channel.

Through the U.S. naval blockade, Trump claims the United States has opened the strait to all commercial ships other than those from Iran, crippling Iran's economy.

But Iran rejects Trump's characterization, asserting the waterway is under the "complete management and control" of Iran and that no ships can pass without its permission.

Hearings

Continued from Page 1A

and deportations have surged in recent weeks, according to data from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

It also comes as the administration has made it easier for immigration authorities to deny asylum claims. More children are being brought in front of immigration judges for mass hearings, including unaccompanied minors, legal observers say.

The controversial hearings are preliminary and offer individuals an opportunity to enter pleas or request relief, such as asylum. They are similar to arraignments in criminal court and are typically the first time people appear before an immigration judge.

But while master hearings with 20 to 30 people have been commonplace for years, the sheer size of these recent hearings is concerning immigration attorneys who describe them as intentionally rushed and chaotic.

One of the central concerns is that immigrants are having their scheduled court dates moved up by months or years, leaving them little time to prepare for the hearings. Critics also say the quick pace of the proceedings, coupled with confusion about how they operate, has meant more people are missing their court dates. Those who don't show up are often subject to removal orders.

"This will push many more people into deportation proceedings," said Muzaffar Chishti, a senior fellow with the nonpartisan Migration Policy Institute.

Supporters say the effort could cut down the more than 3.4 million cases pending in immigration court, which has long been strained by backlogs.

"This is a very effective way to reduce the backlog," said Matt O'Brien, a former immigration judge and the deputy executive director of Federation for American Immigration Reform, a group that advocates for stricter limits on immigration.

In a statement, the DOJ said: "Reducing the immigration court backlog remains one of the highest priorities for this administration. The Justice Department is restoring integrity to our immigration system by hearing cases fairly, expeditiously, and uniformly, in accordance with the law."

Surge is 'unprecedented'

Master hearings are short proceedings in which judges review the government's charges and ask what, if any, legal relief an immigrant is seeking, as well as whether they have legal counsel. Judges will then schedule hearings where requests for asylum and other forms of relief are litigated.

In recent months, immigration attorneys have reported a sharp increase in the number of large-scale master hearings in immigration courts across the country, from Iowa and Texas to New Jersey and Massachusetts. Over 1,300 such hearings were held in June alone, a nearly threefold jump from the same period in 2025, according to data analyzed by Mobile Pathways, a nonprofit that tracks immigration court data.

Joseph Perez, an immigration attorney based in Virginia, said he's had clients in hearings with 20 to 30 other people. These smaller hearings are more typical, and he described them as manageable not only for immigrants but for judges and court staff, too.

"These larger hearings go on all day," he told USA TODAY. "It's unreasonable."

In Chicago, immigration lawyers described hearings with nearly 200 people before a single immigration judge. Respondents crowded the hallways and the inside of courtrooms. Once the proceedings began, the ones in the back struggled to hear judges as they asked questions like "How many of you have a lawyer?" and "Are you claiming asylum?"

Children wait outside of an immigration court at the Jacob K. Javits Federal Building on July 31 in New York City. MICHAEL M. SANTIAGO/GETTY IMAGES

"The sheer scale of these 'mega master' hearings is truly unprecedented," said Kiki Moseley, chair of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, at a July news conference in Chicago.

Some supporters of the larger hearings are concerned that the format could cause immigration judges to burn out.

"There is a danger there," said Andrew Arthur, a resident fellow in law and policy at the conservative Center for Immigration Studies.

Burnout is what happened to former immigration judge Elizabeth Treacy, who resigned on June 22 after presiding over three large master hearings in Chicago that each listed between 130 and 150 people.

"Whenever you have a high volume of anything in any field, it leaves a possibility for error because of fatigue [and] because of the repetitive nature of what you're reviewing," Treacy told WBEZ Chicago. "I never wanted to make a mistake in those kinds of circumstances."

In a statement, the Executive Office for Immigration Review, which oversees immigration courts under DOJ, said it "prioritizes the timely completion of all cases and makes scheduling adjustments as needed to ensure cases do not languish."

"Unnecessary delay hurts both aliens with meritorious claims and the American public who wish to see aliens with non-meritorious claims removed as quickly as possible," it added. "As it continues to add new immigration judges, EOIR will continue to make scheduling adjustments to ensure all cases are handled in a timely and lawful manner."

Deportation orders surge

These mass hearings have coincided with a sharp increase in the number of cases ruled in absentia, meaning the judge issued deportation orders after someone failed to appear in court.

Of the 10,370 people assigned to hearings in June, 58% were ruled absent, according to DOJ data analyzed by Mobile Pathways.

Moseley and other immigration lawyers said officials provided little notice to people whose court dates were moved up by several months or, in some cases, years. Advocates said some didn't show up because they're scared of being arrested inside the courthouse – a tactic the Trump administration employed for months before it was blocked from doing so last year.

Other immigrants allegedly showed up but were issued removal orders because of chaos in the courthouse.

"We have witnessed immigrants being ordered removed for missing their court dates – not because they did not come to court, but because they arrived on time and amid the overcrowding and confusion, could not find the correct courtroom or hear their case being called," Moseley said.

Immigration attorneys said the Trump administration is relying on the high rates of absentia orders to close cases, issue removal orders and funnel more immigrants into deportation proceedings.

University of Iowa law student Chase McLaren attended what's believed to be the first "mega master" hearing in Omaha, Nebraska. McLaren said the judge issued orders in a "rapid-fire" manner. Every person who did not attend the day's hearing received deportation orders, McLaren told The Des Moines Register, part of the USA TODAY Network.

Andrew Arthur, a resident fellow in law and policy at the Center for Immigration Studies, largely pins the high number of absentia orders on the Biden administration, which he said failed to properly screen undocumented immigrants at the border.

Arthur also said the federal government has the burden of proving that they served a hearing notice at an immigrant's last known address. If the government fails to do that and someone is ordered removed because they didn't show up, the respondent can move to reopen the case.

Courts remain overwhelmed

Immigration courts are experiencing a backlog of over 3.4 million cases as of June, according to the Executive Office for Immigration Review, which oversees immigration courts.

That number is down from 3.7 million a year earlier and a high of 3.9 million under the last year of the Biden administration, which oversaw a more than doubling of the immigration court backlog since 2021, according to government data.

"They've made great progress at driving down the backlog," Arthur said of the Trump administration, noting that the number of pending cases decreased in fiscal year 2025 for the first time in over a decade.

To expand its mass deportation agenda, the administration has also carried out a record hiring spree of immigration judges, many of whom have past ties with the federal government and lack immigration law experience, records show.

Immigration attorneys and legal experts have criticized the administration for what they call partisan hiring practices that emphasize loyalty to the president's agenda over objective decision-making.

The Executive Office for Immigration Review said it evaluates all immigration judges, regardless of background, on factors such as conduct, impartiality, adherence to the law, productivity and professionalism. The office added that all judges have a legal, ethical and professional obligation to be impartial and neutral in adjudicating cases.

Christopher Cann reports for USA TODAY, Isabelle Foland reports for the Des Moines Register, and Mary Ann Koruth reports for the Bergen Record.

Epstein victim's brother carries the fight

Sky Roberts relaunches Giuffre's nonprofit group

Laura Trujillo
USA TODAY

Sky Roberts and his sister Virginia Roberts Giuffre in an undated family photo.
PROVIDED BY FAMILY OF VIRGINIA ROBERTS GIUFFRE

There was a time, Sky Roberts says, when he thought he would be celebrating his big sister's Aug. 9 birthday with her, margaritas in hand and sharing stories of childhood parties with their cousins.

Instead, he will mark the day honoring Virginia Roberts Giuffre's advocacy for victims of sex trafficking and continuing her work.

He is relaunching his sister's nonprofit Soar (Speak Out, Act, Reclaim) to support victims of sex trafficking, abuse and domestic violence. Roberts Giuffre, a key accuser of late financier and convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, died by suicide at 41 in April 2025.

In many ways, he's just making his role official. He has spent the past year working for justice for Roberts Giuffre and other victims.

Roberts met with dozens of women who also say Epstein sexually abused and trafficked them. He stood at the U.S. Capitol to support the Epstein Transparency Act. He demonstrated outside Zorro Ranch in New Mexico to push for the release of unredacted documents in the Epstein files.

He has told his sister's story again and again – how she accused Andrew Mountbatten Windsor, the former prince, of sexually abusing her at age 17 when she was trafficked by Epstein. And how she later built a beautiful life with three children.

"It's fitting to launch it again on her birthday. She always wanted to bring joy and happiness to women as she helped them," Roberts says in a video call from an office tucked into a corner of the Colorado home he shares with his wife and two children. Stenciled letters spell out JUSTICE on a wood sign behind him. It came from one of the Zorro Ranch demonstrators. "I always knew I'd work on the nonprofit, but I didn't expect it would be without her."

Now he wants the organization to be a resource hub for survivors, something his sister never had.

"We want to be that family for the survivors," says his wife, Amanda Roberts. "There is such a gap in support when a survivor comes forward. And we've seen how important it is for family to step up with a survivor."

Soar is relying on donations to help women, including an emergency fund to help victims of Epstein. The late Queen Elizabeth's contribution to Soar might soon help. The former prince, her second son, settled a civil suit with Roberts Giuffre in 2022 for an undisclosed amount. He said he would make a "substantial donation" in support of victims' rights to her organization but did not admit any wrongdoing.

A statement issued at the time said that the former prince "regrets his association with Epstein and commends the bravery of Ms. Giuffre and other survivors in standing up for themselves and others." King Charles II removed Mountbatten Windsor's title in November 2025.

The Mirror has reported the settlement was $16 million, with the Queen contributing $2 million to the charity. Roberts Giuffre died in Australia without a will, so the estate is now tied up in disagreements between members of Roberts Giuffre's family.

> **"It's fitting to launch it again on her birthday. She always wanted to bring joy and happiness to women as she helped them."**
> **Sky Roberts**

Soar was recently registered as a nonprofit. A representative of the group won't comment on how much money is in the fund.

Roberts Giuffre began trying to start the organization in 2014 to "help survivors of abuse – the opposite of what Epstein had done," she wrote in her memoir, "Nobody's Girl," published posthumously in August 2025.

Her last attempt was in 2021, but it struggled as she battled lawsuits, wrote her memoir and suffered from mental and physical health issues.

"We didn't want to let this die with her," Roberts says. He is leading Soar with his wife and family friend and their publicist Dini von Mueffling.

When Roberts Giuffre first shared her story publicly to a British tabloid reporter in 2011 about how Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell sexually assaulted her and trafficked her to the former prince, politicians and businessmen, she was dismissed along with other victims.

Undeterred, she continued to repeat herself. Louder, even – in civil suits and her accusations in criminal suits.

Epstein died by suicide in jail while awaiting trial on federal sex trafficking charges in 2019. He had served 13 months in a Florida jail in 2008 after pleading guilty to state prostitution charges. Maxwell is serving 20 years in prison after being convicted of sex trafficking minors and related conspiracy charges.

Roberts says he won't give up on his sister's work. While Soar isn't a political organization, he and his wife will continue to lobby for Virginia's Law, which would remove the federal statute of limitations on sex abuse cases, and push for the release of all the Epstein documents.

Pushing for transparency and justice for victims can be discouraging, as files continue to be released with victims' names but often without those of the accused.

Acting U.S. Attorney Todd Blanche, who has been criticized by Epstein victims over the way the Department of Justice has handled the files, moved one step closer to confirmation on Aug. 7. Lawmakers introduced a bill on Aug. 5 to allow state attorneys general and survivors to sue the U.S. Attorney General and demand transparency in the files. New Mexico sued the DOJ for "stonewalling" its investigation into Epstein's Zorro Ranch, where women, including Roberts Giuffre, say they were trafficked.

That's when Roberts draws inspiration from his sister's journals, her voice.

He thumbs through years of her handwritten ideas and notes.

"You sit alone with yourself and question, 'Am I doing the right thing? Would she be proud? Would she be smiling down?' The journals give us that," he says.

"She wanted other survivors to know that it is hard, and they think there is no way they can be happy. But that they can survive."

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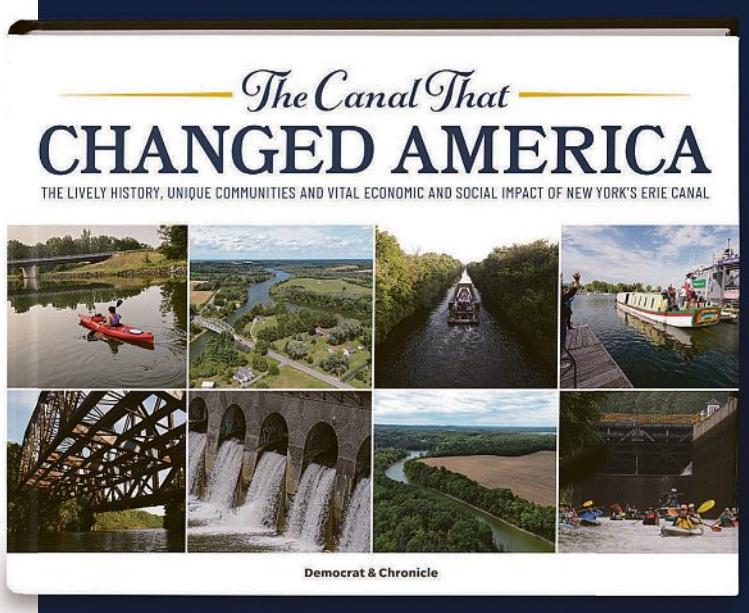
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First up: Primary in SC will set the tone for Democratic Party

Some see contest as wide open as pols make visits

Swapna Venugopal Ramaswamy
USA TODAY

Since 1992, anytime a Democrat has won the White House, South Carolina primary voters have picked the winning candidate. Bill Clinton, Barack Obama and Joe Biden were the top vote-getters in the state on their roads to the presidency.

As Democrats seek a path back to 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. in 2028, South Carolina will again be the first state in the nation to hold a Democratic presidential primary – or at least the state sanctioned by party leaders to vote first. The Democratic National Committee officially confirmed Aug. 15 that South Carolina is the party's choice to replace Iowa and New Hampshire, the traditional leadoff states, in two years to better reflect the party's diverse voters.

Many potential presidential candidates already are making pilgrimages to the state, even though the primary won't happen until Jan. 22, 2028.

That includes multiple trips by California Gov. Gavin Newsom for the South Carolina Democratic Party's "On the Road" series, an initiative designed to connect national and regional Democratic figures to local communities.

Arizona Sen. Mark Kelly participated in a South Carolina Democratic Party town hall event in 2025. Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear was an SCDP speaker earlier in 2026. Former Vice President Kamala Harris, Democrats' unsuccessful 2024 candidate, participated in a private fundraiser this year. Maryland Gov. Wes Moore and New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker, the latter a 2020 presidential candidate, took part in this year's "On the Road" series.

"Everybody comes here to test the water," said Brent Nelsen, a political science professor at Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina. "Because we have a significant African American population, it is a great place for Democratic candidates to test their message with one of the main foundational blocks of the Democratic coalition."

More than 60% of South Carolina's Democratic primary electorate is African American, which is the party's most reliable voting bloc. Matters of faith and affordability are the most important issues for voters, and a moderate candidate is likely to do best here, the state's Democratic leaders and political experts say.

South Carolina is in the Bible belt

South Carolina voters tend to be conservative and deeply religious, and candidates who can speak to their religious or spiritual beliefs would do well, said Christale Spain, chair of the South Carolina Democratic Party.

"It is a part of how you have to campaign in the Deep South," said Spain. "It's the Bible belt."

Spain said while faith communities are part of the political landscape, dominated mostly by Baptists and Methodists, it doesn't mean that people from other denominations or religions would be at a disadvantage.

Political commentator Bakari Sellers, a former member of the South Carolina House of Representatives, agreed.

"Rooted in faith is important. It's not a religiosity, although, you know, Black Christianity is extremely strong, but it's having some center of faith," he said. "At the end of the day, we want somebody who understands the power of prayer."

He pointed to Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, who is Jewish, and Moore, who is a Southern Baptist.

"Both come in with the ability to understand the power of faith, the power of prayer, and they can do well," he said.

Candidates willing to 'do the work' and increase voter turnout

California Gov. Gavin Newsom talks with veterans at an event hosted by the South Carolina Democratic Party on Feb. 23, in Manning, South Carolina. SEAN RAYFORD/GETTY IMAGES

Former Vice President Kamala Harris is among Democrats who have traveled to South Carolina this year. The state hosts the first Democratic presidential primary. JONATHAN ERNST/REUTERS

Rep. Jim Clyburn, South Carolina's only Democratic congressman, is seen as a kingmaker, and in an Aug. 3 interview with Roland Martin, he said Black voters should not be taken for granted.

"The fact of the matter is you want to win in November. So you ought to put people on the field who demonstrate that they can appeal to all those corners that make up this party," said Clyburn, an influential member of the Congressional Black Caucus. "The African American vote is very important to the Democratic Party."

Successful candidates will be able to inspire turnout, Clyburn said, noting that only about 59% of eligible Black voters cast ballots in 2024.

South Carolina Democrats will gravitate to candidates who are willing to do the work of connecting with voters and helping Democratic candidates win in the state, Spain said.

"The candidate that wants to help South Carolina Democrats break the Republican supermajority of the State House. The candidate that wants to help Dr. Anna Andrews become the next junior senator from South Carolina. The candidate that wants to help elect the next Democratic governor in South Carolina," Spain said. "That's who does well in South Carolina."

The state's voters also want candidates who can connect with them on issues of affordability.

"Someone who can speak to the pain that everybody feels across the country," Spain said. "The cost of gas, the cost of groceries, access to affordable health care, education – all those things matter to South Carolinians just like they matter to Democratic voters across the country."

Among candidates with buzz, she said, are Newsom and Booker.

"I don't know that there's one name that rises above the others, but you have people like Gov. Newsom, because he made national headlines for all the work he's done to push back against the unconstitutional redistricting," she said.

Booker has "great relationships" from when he ran for president in 2020 and had a big team on the ground, she said.

Progressives vs. moderates

While the Democratic Party is facing an ongoing ideological tug-of-war between the moderate establishment and its progressive wing nationwide, moderates still have an edge in the conservative state, say the state's party leadership and political experts.

The decision to put South Carolina first is one of the smartest strategic moves the Democratic National Committee has made in a long time, said Melissa DeRosa, a Democratic strategist.

"It will reward the candidate who can assemble the core Democratic coalition – not simply excite the loudest, most homogeneous fringe faction of the party," she said.

Did she have a guess ?

"We'll see on the 'who,' but it unquestionably favors candidates who start early, have money and organization, build real relationships in South Carolina, can win over Jim Clyburn," DeRosa said.

"And understand that social media buzz is no substitute for working-class support."

Sellers doesn't think far-left progressive candidates such as Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York will do well among the traditional Democratic base voters in the state.

"South Carolina is going to cull the herd extremely early," he said. "This isn't where a far-left movement is going to come through and sweep the state ... where someone like AOC will be able to bring far left-ideologies into the environment and be persuasive or victorious."

Ocasio-Cortez hasn't said whether she will run in 2028. Another progressive thought to be considering running is Rep. Ro Khanna of California. He served as the SCDP state convention keynote speaker this year.

Gibbs Knotts, professor of political science at Coastal Carolina University and author of the 2020 book "First in the South: Why South Carolina's Presidential Primary Matters," said the state has often played the role of tiebreaker when Iowa and New Hampshire, traditionally the first two states to hold primaries, picked different candidates.

This time, it is slated to play a different role than it's had before, he said, and the person who emerges on top in South Carolina is likely to be a moderate Democrat, as the state's voters tend to be a "little more conservative on the ideological spectrum."

"Most progressive candidates, I think, will struggle some in South Carolina, given the Democratic electorate and the political culture in the state," he said.

Sellers cast the progressive movement in the country as a "suburban, white, upper crust type of movement."

"That doesn't mesh with what we have here in South Carolina," he said.

Sellers' top picks for who might do well? Moore, Beshear and Georgia Sen. Jon Ossoff, in no particular order. They are all viewed as mainstream, pragmatic Democrats, he said.

He classified Newsom as a "somewhat unknown quantity."

"He has name ID coming into the state, but again, the 'I am the smartest person and the most handsome person in the room, all you have to do is ask me' type of candidacy doesn't necessarily play well here," Sellers said.

'Hunger for something different'

While the state is traditional and not prone to radicalism, Nelsen said there's an appetite for change.

"I hear it on the streets that there's this hunger for something different, something exciting, something that you can really get excited about," he said. "So perhaps an AOC or somebody else emerges."

Still, he said he'd be surprised if a Democratic Socialists of America candidate won in South Carolina, adding that he doesn't see Clyburn backing such a candidate.

"But I would not be surprised that a DSA candidate had a very strong showing that might then propel that person to stronger showings in subsequent primaries," he said.

Spain was optimistic about progressives' chances.

"I think they'll play well in South Carolina," said Spain, who worked on Sen. Bernie Sanders' 2016 presidential campaign.

However, she said, progressive candidates who have gone to Iowa and New Hampshire for decades would have to make the same level of investment in South Carolina and be "unafraid to speak to issues that matter to the Black community and help uplift those issues as well."

Candidates' efforts to focus on South Carolina could be complicated by threats from Iowa and New Hampshire Democrats to hold their 2028 nominating contests first, regardless of the national party's decision on a calendar.

Harris is not a given

Early presidential polls suggest Harris has a head start on the Democratic field, but it's not a given that she'll do well in South Carolina, Knotts said.

"I mean, she is from California. And so the ability to sort of connect with Southern voters would be something that you'd want to look at," Knotts said.

The Democratic National Committee's autopsy of why the party lost the 2024 election, released this year, cited Harris' inability to energize voters as one of the reasons.

"Losing a whopping 6.8 million voters who supported Biden in 2020 proved pivotal in this extremely close election," the autopsy report said.

"Harris's inability to mobilize these pro-Biden voters may have been the campaign's biggest failure."

While Sellers and Spain said Harris has a good chance in the 2028 primary, Nelsen wasn't optimistic.

"I think there's very little enthusiasm for her. I'm on a college campus, and no one has emerged as a clear favorite for anybody," Nelsen said.

His top three choices? Shapiro, Moore and Newsom.

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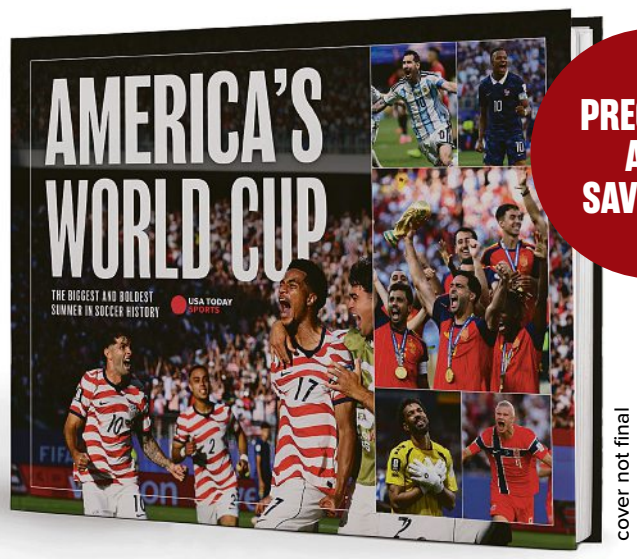

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'Democratic extremism'? GOP, heal thyself.

Rex Huppke
USA TODAY

Elon Musk displays a chainsaw given to him by Argentine President Javier Milei during the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) outside Washington, DC, on Feb. 20, 2025. NATHAN HOWARD/REUTERS

Between now and the November midterm elections, and probably well beyond that, you'll hear endless chatter about "Democratic extremism," and it will be Hilarious with a capital "H," because it will all come from the mouths of Republicans.

"The Democrats want to destroy America!" they'll holler.

"The Democrats are all socialists!" they'll rail, unable to define socialism if their lives depended on it.

"No, better yet," they'll scream, veins bulging in their furrowed brows, "the Democrats are COMMUNISTS!!"

Oh my, the horror! Someone pull up my fainting chair, I seem to have caught the vapors! Let's put this nonsensical rhetoric to bed right now.

GOP has spent past decade worshiping extreme president

Republicans have spent the past decade worshiping the most extreme president in our nation's history, a man with an almost impossibly long history of loathsome behavior and malicious dishonesty. While doing so, they have embraced some of the most extreme political views and policies imaginable, shattering political norms and leveraging hate and division to gain power:

- GOP lawmakers rallied behind a fight to do away with birthright citizenship. They have unapologetically supported federal immigration agents who shot and killed innocent Americans while also working to deport U.S. citizens and ripping apart communities across the country.
- They allowed Elon Musk, a childish unelected billionaire with no knowledge of how our government works, to come along and gut the federal workforce.
- They have confirmed wildly unqualified Cabinet officials like Robert F. Kennedy Jr., nominated because he endorsed Donald Trump during the 2024 presidential campaign, and watched as he spread dangerous anti-vaccine misinformation and eliminated key jobs in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Already this year, under Kennedy's leadership, measles cases in America have hit a 35-year high.

- They allowed Trump to be their party's nominee after the MAGA figurehead fomented an attack on the U.S. Capitol and spread endless lies about the security of our elections. He's still spinning those lies, ceaselessly, and Republicans do nothing to stop him. In fact, GOP House Speaker Mike Johnson babbles conspiratorial election-denial nonsense right along with Trump.

Yet Republicans want to talk about extremism?

Let's count GOP extremisms

Extremism is having a line in your party's 2024 platform that reads, in all-caps: "CARRY OUT THE LARGEST DEPORTATION OPERATION IN AMERICAN HISTORY."

And then holding a convention with cultish Trump followers waving "MASS DEPORTATION NOW" signs.

Extremism is when an administration detains, as The Associated Press has reported, "at least 52 parents and spouses of active-duty service members," deporting at least six of them.

Extremism is using transgender people, a staggeringly small percentage of the U.S. population, as a political cudgel, doing everything possible to make their lives hell.

Extremism is proposing ballot initiatives like one in Washington state that would require students who want to play on girls' sports teams to have genital examinations.

Extremism is when the administration cuts states that didn't vote for Trump off from billions in federal funding for energy projects, prompting two Democratic lawmakers to release a joint statement that said, "This Administration has now admitted in court what has long been obvious: it terminated nearly 300 cost-cutting energy projects for no reason other than the fact that the states they were in did not vote for the President in the 2024 election."

Extremism is enacting draconian state-level abortion bans, vocally opposing any kind of diversity and, as the Republican-led state of Texas has done, requiring 5 million public school students to study Bible verses as part of normal curriculum.

Extremism is science denialism and a willingness to spin outrageous lies in order to maintain power.

This GOP extremism – which, it's worth noting, does nothing to help anyone, except maybe White folks who fear anything outside their own faith and worldview – preceded the rise of Trump.

Way back in 2012, congressional scholars Thomas Mann and Norman Ornstein wrote a book called "It's Even Worse Than It Looks" and noted: "One of the two major parties, the Republican Party, has become an insurgent outlier – ideologically extreme; contemptuous of the inherited social and economic policy regime; scornful of compromise; unpersuaded by conventional understanding of facts, evidence and science; and dismissive of the legitimacy of its political opposition."

Ideologically extreme. Even back then.

Democratic outliers are the exception, not the rule

And now, as they sit in control of the White House, the U.S. Supreme Court and both houses of Congress, flexing power gained through relentless extremism, Republicans want to build a midterm campaign around labeling Democrats as extremists.

That's rich.

Democrats of all stripes are far from perfect, and there are always outliers with more extreme leftist views. But unlike the MAGA-gripped GOP, they are the exception and not the rule.

And the extremism of which Republicans speak involves things like Medicare for all or a national health care program, something that, according to a Data for Progress poll and an Economist/YouGov poll last year, is favored by about 60% or more of Americans.

It involves abolishing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which, according to a recent Economist/YouGov poll, is favored by 48% of Americans, with only 40% opposing.

Even 38% of non-MAGA Republicans support eliminating ICE. Why do you think that is? I'm guessing it's because of Republican extremism.

Extremism among Democrats, if you're a Republican squawker, involves having a Muslim name, like Democratic U.S. Senate candidate Abdul El-Sayed in Michigan or New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani. You are an extremist if you support someone with a name that is not ... what? ... American enough for those who claim to be the standard-bearers of Americanness?

The GOP's idea of extremism involves primary victories by a relatively small number of Democrats who identify as democratic socialists, candidates who are promoting broadly popular progressive policies like raising taxes on wealthy Americans and helping other Americans afford food, housing and health care. Scary!

Don't believe fearmongering that socialism is overtaking America

America is not about to be overrun by socialists. Some parts of the country, however, are appreciating and voting for candidates willing and able to fight for changes that will make their constituents' lives better. That's not extremism. It's a reasonable response to Republicans' refusal to believe government can help people and unwillingness to focus on anyone who isn't wealthy.

Democratic extremism – in the eyes of the Republicans apoplectically screaming "COMMIES!" – is largely a reflection of what mainstream Americans want. They're sick of high food prices, unaffordable rent and health care, anti-science rhetoric, cruel immigration policies and the kind of wanton governmental corruption Trump and the GOP engage in daily.

Republicans have controlled the government for almost two years and have only proved themselves to be the real extremists.

Don't let them tell you otherwise. Don't buy their flimflam.

And next time you hear a Republican caterwauling about "Democratic extremism," roll your eyes and say what needs to be said: "That's a laugh."

Follow USA TODAY columnist Rex Huppke on the Bluesky platform at @rexhuppke.bsky.social and on Facebook at facebook.com/RexIsAJerk.

Stop the 'bad bots,' protect news media and human readers

Danielle Coffey
Opinion contributor

News publishers across the country are struggling with a uniquely modern problem – their webpages are being overrun with bots.

Content that is written for human readers is being consumed by millions of these automated crawlers that comb the internet and often go out of their way to disguise their identity and steal content. These uninvited "bad bots," many of which come from China or other countries, are slowing down publishers' pages for users and undermining a healthy content licensing market that would support continued community coverage, ultimately impacting countless newsrooms' ability to serve their readers.

Publishers have tried to stop these bots on their own, but they need help.

Thankfully, Reps. Laurel Lee, R-Florida, Valerie Foushee, D-North Carolina, and Gus Bilirakis, R-Florida, recently introduced the Stealth Bot Prohibition Act, a new piece of bipartisan transparency legislation that would require bad bots to disclose their identity and purpose, giving content providers the information they need to protect their work.

This is a simple, commonsense solution that is already receiving wide support from members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, and it couldn't come at a more urgent time.

Content providers all across the internet – including web archives, libraries, health and financial institutions, and even responsible artificial intelligence companies themselves – have reported a dramatic increase in the number of bad bots weighing down their websites. It's a problem so widespread that experts now say there are more bots than people on the internet.

This new flood of traffic is changing the makeup of the internet itself, and in the process, creating a significant financial burden for newsrooms both large and small.

With normal human activity, the costs of hosting a website – servers, electricity, bandwidth, etc. – are offset by users paying for subscriptions or viewing or clicking on ads. But bad bots don't click on ads, and they don't pay for subscriptions. They don't even browse a website like a human, with a few page views a day. They hit pages over and over again, sometimes millions of times in a single day.

All that traffic can slow a website down for human readers, and if it happens enough, can trigger bandwidth overage charges, slower pages or even total outages.

Many publishers, especially local news providers, are already operating at razor-thin margins and can't afford the higher technical costs that come with this deluge of bad bots.

To make matters worse, many of these bad bots take news content just to put it on a multibillion dollar reseller market, one where AI developers buy news content from the owners of the bots, not the creators of the content.

They then use that content to create substitutive products that directly compete with the publisher websites themselves. Users have started getting their news and questions answered by AI chatbots, rather than clicking on links to the original sources of this information.

As a result, web traffic for news websites continues to fall.

Reversing this trend is the first step in establishing a healthy licensing marketplace where content is rewarded as a valuable input for AI, just like investments in energy and chips.

The news industry – from the largest corporations to the smallest local newsrooms – has tried to block these bots using technical fixes, but bad bots are so advanced that they're able to disguise themselves to look like good bots or even humans.

Malicious foreign actors are now hijacking devices and servers in ordinary people's homes to act as "residential proxies," masking not only the identity of their bots, but their source as well.

These bots are so effective at disguising themselves that publishers can't keep up, and are losing precious resources trying to play bot Whac-a-Mole.

Instead, we need lawmakers to step up to protect quality content that requires tremendous investment to create. The Stealth Bot Prohibition Act offers a simple solution. It doesn't ban bots outright, but forces them to identify themselves, a commonsense transparency measure that gives news publishers the information they need to block bad bots themselves, with the Federal Trade Commission and other enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance.

Reps. Lee, Foushee and Bilirakis are offering a reasonable, modest standard, and it's one that their colleagues should get behind to keep the internet clean and protect the quality content that the American people and the world rely on.

Danielle Coffey is president & CEO of the News/Media Alliance, which represents over 2,000 news and magazine media outlets worldwide.

USA TODAY

"USA TODAY hopes to serve as a forum for better understanding and unity to help make the USA truly one nation." – Allen H. Neuharth, Founder, Sept. 15, 1982

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Familiar faces fill list to replace Leavitt

Joey Garrison
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – Karoline Leavitt's sudden announcement that she will soon step down as White House press secretary has fueled widespread speculation about President Donald Trump's upcoming pick to replace her.

No shortage of names are being floated as Trump prepares to choose his next chief spokesperson and one of the top faces of the Trump administration. Leavitt, who cited her desire to spend more time with her two young children, formally departs the White House at the end of August.

White House press secretaries are best known for fielding questions from reporters behind the briefing room lectern. With her combative communications style, Leavitt used the position to set the tone for the president's agenda and the administration's response to attacks from opponents.

Trump often has an eye toward what he calls "central casting" for the part when he fills White House staff and Cabinet positions. Trump likes individuals who are telegenic and speak with authority, characteristics that are prerequisites for the very public role of press secretary.

Five of the six press secretaries across Trump's two terms in office have been women. Trump also has shown a willingness to go outside the box – the 28-year-old Leavitt, for example, was the youngest press secretary in White House history.

Trump has not indicated who he may pick, but here are 10 names receiving early speculation – and attention in betting markets – as potential Leavitt replacements.

Habba

Alina Habba

Alina Habba, a former personal attorney for Trump, gained notoriety in 2024 as the president's defense counsel during his legal proceedings in New York. She made frequent appearances in front of television cameras on behalf of Trump.

After his 2024 election victory, Trump named Habba counselor to the president. He later nominated her as the top federal prosecutor in New Jersey. In December, Habba resigned as U.S. attorney for the district of New Jersey after a federal appeals court ruled she was serving in the role unlawfully because she was never confirmed by Congress.

Jennings

Scott Jennings

Conservative political commentator Scott Jennings is known for his spirited arguments with Democrats as a senior political contributor for CNN. You can bet Trump has taken notice of Jennings' viral clips.

The Kentucky native, who also hosts a radio show, last year published a glowing book about Trump, "A Revolution of Common Sense: How Donald Trump Stormed Washington and Fought for Western Civilization."

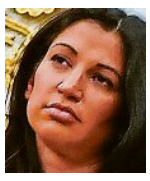
Anna Kelly

Anna Kelly currently serves under Leavitt in the White House press office as principal deputy press secretary.

The White House has increasingly deployed Kelly in front of the camera for interviews with Fox News, primarily discussing the Iran war and other foreign policy items. At 29, Kelly is not much older than Leavitt.

Katie Miller

Katie Miller, former press secretary for Vice President Mike Pence and the wife of Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller, is a known commodity in Trump world.


Katie Miller

Miller worked as a top aide for the Trump administration's Department of Government Efficiency, led by tech executive Elon Musk. She stepped down last August to launch her own podcast, where she frequently interviews Trump officials. Her guests have included Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Boyle

Matthew Boyle

Matthew Boyle, Washington bureau chief of the conservative outlet Breitbart, could get a look if Trump wants a press secretary with close ties to conservative media.

Boyle has interviewed Trump multiple times, including in the Oval Office in June. The New York Post reported Boyle is an early frontrunner for the job, calling him "a favorite among well-connected Trump allies who recognize the dogged Breitbart scribe's fiery but steady presence in the conservative media ecosystem."

Cheung

Steven Cheung

Steven Cheung, a longtime loyal Trump communications aide known for his tough, no-nonsense approach, could be considered for press secretary if Trump wants to appoint from within the White House.

Cheung leads the White House communications office in Trump's second term as communications director. Cheung works primarily behind the scenes, however, and taking on the role of press secretary would be just the opposite.

Taylor Budowich

Taylor Budowich, a longtime Trump adviser, left the White House last September for the private sector after serving as deputy chief of staff.

In his former role, Budowich oversaw White House communications and Cabinet affairs. He previously worked as Trump's 2020 campaign spokesman and helped manage the pro-Trump Super PAC known as Make America Great Again Inc.

Daravi

Roma Daravi

Roma Daravi, who was deputy communications director during Trump's first term, is currently vice president of public relations at the Kennedy Center, which Trump has worked to overhaul.

Though not as well known as some of the other names, Daravi has shot up to third place on the live-betting site Kalshi to be the next press secretary – behind only Jennings and Kelly – based on bets placed by users.

Jason Miller

Jason Miller

Jason Miller, another longtime trusted Trump aide and campaign spokesperson, joined the Trump White House this summer to work on messaging before the November midterm elections.

Miller worked in senior capacities for all three of Trump's presidential runs and has frequently defended the president in front of television cameras and other reporters. After the 2024 election, Miller worked as a lobbyist before returning to work for Trump.

Lake

Kari Lake

Another name bandied around is Kari Lake, the firebrand conservative and former television news anchor who lost Arizona elections for governor in 2022 and U.S. Senate in 2024.

Trump tapped Lake to lead the government-funded Voice of America as the Trump administration worked to dismantle the media operation. Trump is a big fan of Lake. However, in May, he nominated Lake to be his U.S. ambassador to Jamaica, a role that would prevent her from being press secretary. Lake still needs Senate confirmation for the ambassadorship.

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Fast-food chains can't rely on deals to drive foot traffic

Results show the strongest performers paired bargains with menu innovation. **Page 3B**

You can check the headlines from your home state or city

We survey and compile the top news stories from all 50 states plus Washington, DC. **Page 4B**

People want fix for high care costs

4 in 10 adults cite cost of health insurance

Ken Alltucker
USA TODAY

On this much Democrats and Republicans agree: The cost of health insurance and health care is the biggest problem in health care today.

A new survey said more than 4 in 10 adults cited the cost of health insurance as the biggest problem that needs to be fixed in the U.S. health care system. That sentiment was consistent across political affiliation, with 45% of Republicans, 44% of Democrats and 42% of independents naming health insurance as their top concern, according to the Commonwealth Fund survey of more than 25,000 adults.

But many people also worried about the amount they spend on co-pays and deductibles for health expenses such as medical bills, lab tests, or prescription drugs. About 36% of adults cited these out-of-pocket costs as their second biggest worry about the U.S. health care system.

People were less stressed about insurer "prior authorizations," which require consumers and doctors to get insurance company approval before billing for health care services or prescriptions.

Millions of Americans who get Affordable Care Act health insurance this year are paying substantially more for premiums, and the survey shows consumers who get this type of insurance are anxious about their ability to pay for coverage for needed medical care.

"Across the political spectrum, people are dealing with the cost of their insurance," said Sara Collins, Commonwealth Fund's senior scholar for expanding coverage and access and tracking health system performance. "It's part of this larger issue of affordability in all aspects of people's lives."

Millions drop ACA plans as subsidies expire

More than 3 million ACA enrollees dropped their coverage as of February amid higher monthly premiums and the expiration of enhanced subsidies that made the health insurance more affordable. When Congress didn't extend the enhanced subsidies that expired at the end of 2025, average costs for ACA enrollees who wanted to keep their insurance plans soared 114% in 2026, according to KFF, a health policy nonprofit.

More than half of survey participants who bought ACA plans or other coverage directly from insurance companies cited cost as their biggest worry, the survey said.

See WORRIES, Page 2B

Use these grocery shopping tips from a veteran employee on your next trip to the store. GETTY IMAGES

Grocery tips from an industry vet

Knowing when to shop can help you save money

Michelle Larson Special to USA TODAY

Ever wondered how grocery store employees shop for themselves? After earning a degree in nutrition, I worked at a food co-op for four years. After that, I was a team leader at Whole Foods for more than eight years. ● Though I pivoted careers nearly a decade ago, the tips I picked up during that time still help me save time and money. ● Grocery prices remain a source of frustration for many shoppers in the United States. But a few simple strategies can help stretch your budget and make trips to the store more efficient.

Use these tips to shop like a grocery store insider:

Sale tags tell you how much time you have

Many stores' sale tags have fine print that tells you when the deal ends.

Checking this info for items you use regularly is a smart way to maximize your grocery budget without taking up unnecessary pantry space or buying so much it spoils before you use it.

End caps and pallet drops often (but not always) offer deep savings

When we built end caps or did pallet drops (big displays in the middle of wide aisles), we typically offered the product at a healthy discount to justify bringing in so much of it.

Some displays were geared more toward an upcoming season or holiday, so don't assume every large display equals a great deal.

Newest product is usually at the back

Grocery stores stock shelves using FIFO – first in, first out – which means the freshest product should be at the back. Reaching past the front row for highly perishable items can buy you several extra days of shelf life.

Many stores offer case discounts

We go through a lot of pinto beans in our house, so I buy them by the case, which often earns me a discount.

See SHOPPING, Page 2B

Half of American workers say they can never retire

Daniel de Visé
USA TODAY

Nearly half of working Americans doubt they will ever be able to fully retire, a new survey says.

Retirement fears are running high, according to the 2026 Retirement Expectations Survey from Thrivent, the financial services company. Among the concerns:

- 47% of workers doubt they will be able to retire completely.
- Only 58% of workers think they'll have enough money to retire on schedule.
- 36% of workers expect to continue earning income in retirement.

"People are looking at retirement more as a transition than a finish line," said Jason Rogoff, a financial adviser at Thrivent.

The survey, conducted by Ipsos in June, reached more than 2,000 American adults.

Nearly half of American workers doubt they'll ever be able to retire fully, a new survey says. CARLO ALLEGRI/REUTERS

Workers fear inflation, AI will hinder their retirement

It comes at a time when American workers are worried about relentless inflation, Social Security shortfalls, conflict in the Middle East and the economic threat posed by AI. More than half of workers surveyed said they fear each of those things will hurt their retirement.

"We're seeing people look at retirement just a little bit differently than they have in the past," Rogoff said.

The findings may also illustrate a broader lack of retirement confidence among employees, experts said, in an era when Americans are expected to do their own retirement saving, chiefly through IRAs and 401(k)s.

"Retirement is a big math problem," said Robert Brokamp, a senior retirement adviser at The Motley Fool. "And you either have to have a really good tool

See WORKERS, Page 2B

Billionaire entrepreneur Richard Branson wears his astronaut's wings at a news conference after flying July 11, 2021 with a crew in Virgin Galactic's passenger rocket plane VSS Unity to the edge of space. JOE SKIPPER/REUTERS

Public can vote on name of Virgin Galactic vehicle

Eric Lagatta
USA TODAY

Most people can't afford to take a commercial trip to space, but people can help name a vehicle that will soon transport paying customers beyond Earth's atmosphere.

Virgin Galactic, a commercial aerospace company specializing in suborbital flights to space, seeks public input on the official name of one of the vehicles that will be part of its next generation of spaceplanes. The opportunity to propose names has passed, but voting is now underway on one of four finalists that could become the official title of one spaceship in the company's fleet.

"This is a rare chance to help shape a piece of spaceflight history, and to be part of a moment that will inspire future explorers for years to come," Virgin Galactic said in an Aug. 11 blog post announcing the initiative.

Here's what to know about Virgin Galactic, its space tourism program and how you can help name one of the company's spacecraft:

What is Virgin Galactic? What to know about Richard Branson's company

Virgin Galactic is an aerospace and space travel company that is part of British billionaire Richard Branson's Virgin Group conglomerate.

Like its competitor Blue Origin, founded by billionaire Jeff Bezos, Virgin Galactic specializes in carrying paying customers on brief flights to the edge of space. The market is one Blue Origin recently took a hiatus from as it turns its focus to developing a lunar lander for NASA's Artemis moon missions.

A tenant of Spaceport America in New Mexico, Virgin Galactic has flown 32 people to space across 12 missions.

Virgin Galactic wants the public to vote on name of spacecraft

Virgin Galactic employees and customers who bought tickets for future trips to space with the company were invited to submit ideas to name a spaceplane in its fleet.

The 276 total proposals have since been whittled down to four finalists "that embody the ambition, optimism, and spirit of exploration at the heart of Virgin Galactic," the company said:

Virgin Galactic recently shared a first-look at its new spaceplane, which it calls Spaceship. The vehicle will soon be flying from New Mexico, taking paying customers on trips to the edge of space.
PROVIDED BY VIRGIN GALACTIC

- Horizon
- Explore
- Ascend
- Apeiron, an ancient Greek word meaning infinite

How to cast your vote

Those age 13 and older have until Aug. 27 to cast a vote at https://www.virgingalactic.com/nameaspaceship for one of the four finalist names, according to Virgin Galactic.

Restart of Virgin Galactic space tourism program falls to 2027

More than two years have elapsed since Virgin Galactic last flew civilian passengers to space in June 2024 before the company paused its spaceflight program.

The reason for the break? To give Virgin Galactic time to develop and test its new Delta-class spaceplane, officially dubbed SpaceShip.

Flights under the company's space tourism program were long expected to resume by the end of 2026. But Virgin Galactic announced in its most recent quarterly financial report that the timeline has now slipped to February 2027.

Developed to be reused for faster turnaround time between missions, the SpaceShip vehicle is an upgraded design of its now-retired VSS Unity spaceplane. With tickets costing $750,000 (and climbing), the vehicle can fly up to eight times a month with six passengers.

Review your preferred grocery store's loyalty app for customized deals and weekly coupons. VIOLETA STOIMENOVA/GETTY IMAGES

Shopping

Continued from Page 1B

To get the deal yourself, you'll first want to verify that your store offers the option (some do dedicated case-lot sales only once or twice a year), then ask an employee to get you a sealed case from inventory (taking loose cans off the shelf doesn't count).

Unit pricing reveals the better deal

Individually packed snacks and single rolls of paper towels can be convenient, but the per-unit price (e.g., cents per ounce) also tends to be higher.

What you may not realize is most retailers print that breakdown right on the shelf tag, meaning there's no need to open your calculator to see whether sizing up is worth it.

Store-brand products are a smart substitute

One of the first things I learned working in grocery is that many private-label products use the same major manufacturers as their name-brand counterparts – but sell them for considerably less. By shopping the store's version of your favorite items, you stand to save significantly without sacrificing quality.

Loyalty apps house digital coupons and extra ways to save

Most grocery store loyalty apps are designed to highlight the best deals in one place. Along with digital coupons, you might find personalized deals based on past purchases or bonus savings for spending a certain dollar amount. If you shop at the same store regularly, you can save a lot without adding much extra effort.

Making your shopping list in logical order saves time

After touring dozens of stores during my time in leadership, it became clear that most grocery stores follow a similar layout: produce and the meat counter first, nonperishables next, and dairy and frozen last.

Knowing this, I take a couple of extra minutes to make my shopping list in that order so I don't waste time circling back for things I've already passed.

Shopping multiple stores gives you the best of both worlds

Working in both a small co-op and a large natural-foods chain gave me a firsthand look at how differently everyone prices their products.

When I can, I go to big-box stores or buying clubs for widely available items at lower prices and to smaller markets for perishables and specialty items, where the selection tends to be better.

Worries

Continued from Page 1B

"If people aren't able to afford their [ACA] premiums, and we're already seeing evidence of that, they're going to become uninsured," Collins said.

Most working-age adults and families get insurance through the workplace, and those costs are rising, too. Companies expect insurance costs for their employees to rise nearly 7% in 2026. That means insurance benefits will cost about $18,500 per employee in 2026, according to consultant Mercer.

The Commonwealth Fund survey said about 44% of adults who get their insurance through the workplace cited the cost of those plans as their top concern. Employers typically pick up most of the cost of health insurance, but workers must pay a portion of the tab, usually through paycheck deductions.

More cuts are on the way under a provision of Republicans' 2025 budget bill that would make millions of Medicaid recipients work, complete job training, or volunteer to maintain government-funded health insurance. As many as 18.5 million people must meet the work requirement to maintain coverage, and the Congressional Budget Office projects that more than 5 million will lose their Medicaid coverage by 2034.

Who can fix health affordability – government or insurance companies?

While both Republicans and Democrats largely agree that health care is driving up the cost of living, they differ on the prescription to fix these expenses. The survey said 65% of Democrats cited the federal government as best able to solve the problem of health insurance costs, but 36% of Republicans said government should act on health insurance costs. Republicans were twice as likely as Democrats to say health insurance companies were better able to address insurance premium costs.

Workers

Continued from Page 1B

or a really good expert who can help you nail down the numbers."

More than a third of the workers surveyed for the Thrivent report said they feel they are behind other people their age in saving for retirement. Half of workers said thinking about retirement makes them anxious.

When the survey asked people how much savings they think they will need to retire in comfort, only 23% chose a figure under $1 million.

"The average person doesn't know what 'enough' is," Brokamp said.

Workers fear they won't have enough money to retire

Many past surveys and studies have shown that American workers are haunted by fears that they won't have enough money in retirement.

One recent survey put the retirement "magic number" at $1.2 million. Others have ranged higher.

But most Americans have nowhere near that much money saved for retirement. Federal data shows that only around half of Americans have retirement accounts at all. Retirement saving is less of a problem for the wealthy. Among people in the top 10% by net worth, more than 90% have retirement accounts, and the median balance is $900,000, according to the 2022 Survey of Consumer Finances.

"We've all heard of the K-shaped economy," Brokamp said. "And I think there's a K-shaped retirement trajectory."

Fears about retirement savings prompt many people to assume they will keep working more or less forever.

Roughly three-quarters of workers plan to work for pay after they officially retire, according to the 2026 Retirement Confidence Survey from the Employee Benefit Research Institute.

Yet only 31% of retirees are actually working, the same survey found.

Returning to the workforce in retirement can be difficult. And many retirees find they can get by on Social Security income and modest savings.

Here are 3 retirement savings tips

The Thrivent report recommends steps workers can take to shore up their retirement goals. Here are three retirement savings tips:

Save something for retirement every year

Many workers save little or nothing for retirement. But even small retirement contributions can compound into large sums, given enough time. In 27 years, for example, a single $1,000 contribution can grow into $15,000, based on past stock market performance.

"We always say that it's really important to put something away, to have some consistency, even if it's a little bit," Rogoff said. "Small, consistent retirement contributions will have a very meaningful impact over time."

Consult a retirement planner

Saving for retirement does not require elaborate planning. One rule of thumb says you should aim to save 10% to 15% of your salary in a retirement account and invest the money in broad index funds.

A full retirement plan, however, is far more complex. It needs to account for many different scenarios, covering when you might retire, how long you might live and how the market might perform, among other factors.

"It's very important to have a plan in place and one that's adjustable based on the economy," Rogoff said.

A financial adviser can help by running the numbers to determine when you can safely retire and how much you can safely spend in retirement. If you aren't ready to hire a human expert, Brokamp said, then consider online retirement planners. Thrivent, AARP, Fidelity, Charles Schwab, Vanguard and many other sites offer planning tools.

"You have so many decisions to make when you retire that you didn't make when you were working," Brokamp said. "When you work, you're just saving."

Save for emergencies, too

Saving for emergencies is an important piece of a retirement plan, financial advisers say, because it covers the financial shocks that can stop you from saving for retirement.

The goal is to set aside enough money to cover three to six months of expenses. And that money should be in an accessible account, not a tax-sheltered retirement account, where early withdrawals can incur penalties.

In a 2025 report, Investopedia estimated the average U.S. family should have at least $35,000 in emergency savings. But any amount of savings is better than none.

ASK JOHNNY

Questioning boss' decisions is necessary

Johnny C. Taylor Jr.
Columnist
USA TODAY

Healthy organizations don't expect employees to remain silent. GETTY IMAGES

Johnny C. Taylor Jr. tackles your workplace questions each week for USA TODAY. Taylor is president and CEO of SHRM, the world's largest trade association of human resources professionals, and author of "Reset: A Leader's Guide to Work in an Age of Upheaval."

Question: My manager recently made a decision that affects my team's workload and results, and I disagree with their approach. I want to raise concerns, but I don't want to come across as difficult or insubordinate. Is it appropriate to question your boss's decision, and if so, how can it be done professionally? – Xavier

Answer**:** Yes, in fact, good leaders should *want* you to question their decisions, respectfully and constructively. Healthy organizations aren't built on blind agreement. They're built on thoughtful dialogue. The issue isn't whether you disagree. It's how you handle that disagreement.

Before raising concerns, remember your manager may be working with information you don't have. Budget constraints, customer commitments, legal considerations, or broader business priorities often shape decisions in ways that aren't immediately visible to everyone. That doesn't mean your concerns aren't valid. It means you should approach the conversation with curiosity rather than certainty.

Seek to understand before you seek to be understood. In other words, start by asking questions to better unpack the reasoning behind the decision. You may discover information that changes your perspective, or you may uncover an opportunity to improve the outcome.

Of course, managers aren't infallible. Sometimes respectful questions surface risks, unintended consequences, or better alternatives that genuinely strengthen the final decision. That's exactly why healthy debate matters.

If, after that conversation, you still believe there's a better path forward, frame your concerns around business outcomes, not personal preferences. Explain how the decision could affect productivity, customer service, quality, costs, risk, or your team's ability to meet its goals. Be specific, avoid emotional language, and whenever possible, offer alternatives. Leaders value employees who bring solutions, not just objections.

At SHRM, one of my favorite Guiding Principles is "Challenge, Decide, Commit" because it strikes the right balance between healthy debate and organizational alignment. During the decision-making process, the floor is open for anyone in the room to challenge ideas thoughtfully. Ask questions. Share your perspective. Offer data or experiences others may not have considered. But once a decision has been made, everyone has a responsibility to commit to making it successful, even if it wasn't the path they advocated. Once the decision is made, continuing to relitigate it creates confusion, erodes trust, and slows execution.

One piece of advice I often share is this: Challenge the decision, but never challenge the relationship. Respectfully disagreeing with your manager is part of building a healthy workplace. Undermining your manager or making the disagreement personal is not.

Healthy organizations don't expect employees to remain silent. They expect them to speak up thoughtfully, listen carefully, and then move forward together.

The goal isn't to win the debate. It's to help the organization make the best decision possible.

A more innovative menu helped Taco Bell report a 7% rise in same-store sales during the second quarter. MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES

Fast-food chains can't rely on deals for traffic

Savyata Mishra and Waylon Cunningham
REUTERS

U.S. fast-food chains, including McDonald's, that spent the second quarter battling to pull in price-conscious diners discovered discounts alone were no longer enough to keep them coming back.

Value meals and promotions have been the industry's most reliable traffic driver for the past two years as consumers squeezed by inflation sought cheaper meals. But results showed the strongest performers paired bargains with menu innovation, quality improvements and a smoother customer experience.

The approach helped chains such as Yum Brands' Taco Bell attract budget-conscious consumers without resorting to blanket discounting across their menus. Its $5, $7 and $9 meal boxes were a hit with customers, while the chain kept introducing new menu items that encouraged spending beyond the entry-level deal.

Value succeeds when it is "really clear and simple" and does not feel like a "bait-and-switch," said Rachel Royster, director of strategic planning and innovation at Connections, a foodservice consultancy.

Taco Bell reported a 7% rise in same-store sales during the quarter, while global comparable sales at McDonald's rose 1.3%. McDonald's struggled despite its under-$3 menu and a $4 breakfast meal. CEO Chris Kempczinski said loyal customers accounted for about two-thirds of the traffic shortfall and blamed execution rather than strategy.

Other chains found that promotions did little to offset pressure on lower-income consumers.

Wendy's, whose Biggie Bag value meals start at $5, reported a 7% drop in U.S. same-restaurant sales and withdrew its annual forecast, while Wingstop posted a 7.5% decline despite promotions including $1 chicken wings.

Wingstop CEO Michael Skipworth said its sales sagged in urban areas, where households typically faced more financial pressure, even as visits climbed as much as 9% in higher-income markets. Wingstop's stock has lost more than three quarters of its value in the past six months.

The quarter also showed that restaurants do not have to be the cheapest option to succeed. Restaurant Brands' Burger King was among the clearest winners. Executives credited promotions including its "2 for $5" and "3 for $7" offers, alongside broader efforts to improve operations and menu quality, for strong U.S. sales growth.

Burger King is "doing discounts but not all the time, and when they do, they make it creative," said independent restaurant consultant John Gordon.

Domino's Pizza also benefited from value-focused offerings and loyalty initiatives that helped drive traffic and support sales. Chipotle delivered strong results while limiting price increases to about 1% to 2%.

The Philly cheesesteak defeated Kansas' burnt end sandwich in the championship matchup. GETTY IMAGES

Philly cheesesteak named America's best sandwich

Anthony Thompson
USA TODAY

After weeks of voting and regional food rivalries, Hellmann's has crowned America's favorite sandwich.

The mayonnaise brand created a nationwide bracket featuring sandwiches representing all 50 states as part of its celebration of the nation's 250th birthday. More than 10,000 sandwich fans participated, casting nearly 100,000 votes throughout the competition.

The bracket turned regional favorites into a national food showdown, with fans backing sandwiches that represent their home states and local food traditions.

In the end, Pennsylvania's Philly cheesesteak emerged on top, giving the state bragging rights to what Hellmann's is calling "America's Sandwich."

A final showdown between Pennsylvania and Kansas

The competition ultimately came down to a matchup between Pennsylvania's cheesesteak and Kansas' burnt end sandwich. Hellmann's promoted the final as a showdown to determine "America's Sandwich," urging fans to cast their votes and make sandwich history. The Kansas entry featured burnt ends, a barbecue staple particularly associated with Kansas City, while Pennsylvania was represented by its iconic cheesesteak.

The contest began with 50 sandwiches divided into four regional brackets: the Midwest, West, Northeast and South. Over five rounds of voting, the field was narrowed from 50 sandwiches to 16 before progressing through the Savory Sixteen, Exquisite Eight, Flavorful Four and the Final Chowdown.

The Philly cheesesteak defeated Kansas' burnt end sandwich in the championship matchup. The other sandwiches to reach the Elite Eight included Nevada's patty melt, Texas' chopped brisket sandwich, New Jersey's Italian sub, Illinois' Italian beef, Alabama's pulled chicken with white sauce and California's tuna salad.

What's next for the cheesesteak?

Company officials said they were surprised that the BLT did not advance further after a strong start in the voting, calling it one of the country's most iconic sandwiches. They also said Kansas' burnt end sandwich exceeded expectations by reaching the championship round despite being a less familiar choice for many Americans.

Hellmann's said the competition was created to celebrate the sandwiches that help define regional food culture across the country.

"America has official symbols for its bird, flower and tree. It was about time we settled the sandwich," Jessica Grigoriou, senior vice president of marketing for condiments at Unilever North America, said in a news release.

"America chose the Philly Cheesesteak, and we'll be celebrating it the Hellmann's way: with a creamy spread of America's number one mayonnaise," Grigoriou said.

50★States

News from across the USA

ALABAMA Montgomery: Alabama voters turned out in small numbers Aug. 11 for special congressional primaries in four districts, with just 5.24% of registered voters casting ballots, according to unofficial results from the Alabama Secretary of State.

ALASKA Juneau: Alaska Gov. Mike Dunleavy said he was "deeply disappointed" that a bill to advance a pipeline for the Alaska LNG project to export natural gas to Asia stalled in the state legislature.

ARIZONA Apache County: The Federal Emergency Management Administration has approved a disaster declaration for the San Carlos Apache Tribe to support recovery from flooding nearly a year ago. The declaration covers the tribal reservation for both physical and economic damages suffered Oct. 10-13, 2025.

ARKANSAS Fort Smith: Presenting the city's second-quarter financial report, Chief Financial Officer Andy Richards said Fort Smith is on pace to meet its debt obligations, remain within its 2026 budget and end the year with stronger reserves than originally projected.

CALIFORNIA Sacramento: Homeownership in California comes later in life than in the rest of the nation, according to a recent analysis by the Public Policy Institute of California. In California, the age at which half of residents become homeowners is 47, the nonprofit found. Nationally, that milestone is reached at age 36.

COLORADO Denver: Colorado's persistent drought and active wildfires are a one-two punch driving wildlife into urban areas, with the state on pace to have the highest number of bear reports since Colorado Parks and Wildlife implemented its statewide digital reporting system in 2019. The agency said it is seeing a significant increase in bear activity statewide this summer.

CONNECTICUT Norwich: Norwich Public Schools is making sure its students will have a great start to their year. On Aug. 23, the school district, along with local business and state lawmakers, will hold the Back to School Bash at Kelly Middle School. The event includes free school supplies for all Norwich pre K-12 students who attend.

DELAWARE New Castle County: Officials say a long-planned RV park on 135 acres of former state open space in the Fort DuPont redevelopment project is back on track after the property appeared to be headed toward a potential sheriff sale.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Washington: D'Aundrey Scott, 32, faces decades in prison after admitting to setting several fires, including one that killed a homeless man, WUSA9 reported. Scott pleaded guilty to several counts of arson on Aug. 14, according to the outlet.

FLORIDA Pensacola: Gov. Ron DeSantis announced he is backing Pensacola's effort to bring Birdon and 2,000 jobs to the city with a $9 million grant. DeSantis made the announcement and presented Mayor D.C. Reeves with a ceremonial check on Aug. 12.

GEORGIA Effingham County: OpenAI says it has committed to an average wage of $80,000 for its new data center in Rincon. At least 400 permanent jobs are expected to come to Effingham County as OpenAI advances plans for its $20 billion Project Camellia data center campus. Employment is projected to reach 1,000 positions at full buildout.

HAWAII Kailua: Some beaches may be safer than others, at least when it comes to theft. The Action Network analyzed the crime statistics of 500 popular beaches' ZIP codes from crimegrade.org, and two in Hawaii ranked in the top 10 safest beaches, with Kailua at No. 7 and Waikiki at No. 10.

IDAHO Boise: The Idaho Judicial Branch announced that Idaho Supreme Court Justice Robyn Brody will become chief justice of the Idaho Supreme Court on Oct. 1, succeeding retiring Chief Justice G. Richard Bevan, Idaho Capital Sun reported.

ILLINOIS Springfield: Nearly 1,000 Illinois state employees in coming years will take office in the storied Illinois State Armory, which has been renamed and dedicated to honor a former governor. Gov. JB Pritzker on Aug. 11 held a ceremony to dedicate the building to former Gov. Jim Edgar, who died at the age of 79 in 2025.

HIGHLIGHT: IOWA

Tyler Faaborg gives a tour of 1100 Farm's mushroom facility on Aug. 8.
CELIA BROCKER/USA TODAY NETWORK

Hardin County: A family farm recently completed an ambitious transition from hogs to mushroom production. The Faaborg family, led by Tanner Faaborg, decided to switch their focus to mushrooms after realizing how much hog farms harm the environment. 1100 Farm, a nod to the average number of hogs the farm used to have, grows mushrooms out of a converted hog barn. After a successful pilot, the farm now produces Oyster, Lion's Mane and Reishi mushrooms for consumers. On Aug. 8, the family and their collaborator, Transformation Project, cut the ribbon on the completed hog barn conversion.

INDIANA Indianapolis: After days of rainfall and hurricane-like winds that have caused substantial flooding, damages and multiple deaths throughout Indiana, President Donald Trump on Aug. 15 approved an emergency declaration for the state.

KANSAS Topeka: As students enter the school year under a new statewide ban of cell phone use in the classroom, the Kansas State Board of Education is working to establish stronger criteria around district technology.

KENTUCKY Frankfort: A Kentucky woman has been charged with two felony counts in connection with vandalism at the World War II Memorial in Washington, U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia Jeanine Pirro said on Aug. 14. Pirro said Melissa Farris faces charges carrying penalties of up to 10 years in prison.

LOUISIANA Vermillion Parish: SpaceX plans to acquire around 130,000 acres for a spaceport that will launch rockets. The site would encompass an 18-mile stretch of marshland in Vermillion Parish, which would be bigger than SpaceX's largest launch site in Boca Chica, Texas.

MAINE Kittery: The Town Council is asking the state's Board of Environmental Protection to hold a public hearing on the Navy's proposal to improve water capacity at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard with a new 2.5 million-gallon tank. The anticipated $500 million-plus plan would add the second water tank near the long-vacant Portsmouth Naval Prison and fund the construction of new water mains and various improvements on Seavey Island.

MARYLAND Ocean City: The city's mayor and Town Council voted unanimously Aug. 11 to move forward with a purchase contract for approximately 198 acres of property for the development of a regional sports complex.

MASSACHUSETTS Natick: Those exploring trails around Pickerel Pond will soon be able to cross directly between two sections of the Sunkaway Conservation Area, as a new floating boardwalk is about to be installed on the water to improve access while protecting wetlands.

MICHIGAN Ionia County: A county resident who exhibited pigs earlier in August at the Kent County Youth Fair now has a confirmed case of swine flu, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services reported on Aug. 14.

MINNESOTA Isanti County: Several cities and counties, including Columbia Heights, West St. Paul, Duluth and Isanti County, are ending or suspending contracts with Flock Safety license plate reader cameras, citing concerns from public trust and privacy to staffing and operational feasibility, KARE11 reported.

MISSISSIPPI Jackson County: The Congressional Black Caucus is urging the Justice Department to launch an independent federal review into the disappearance and death of 18-year-old Nolan Wells, whose family has continued to seek answers more than a month after his body was found on a Mississippi barrier island.

MISSOURI Stone County: A new ride is coming to Silver Dollar City, leaning into Missouri's identity as the Cave State and the park's history. The theme park announced on Aug. 14 that Miner's Mountain Express is coming to the park in spring 2027. The new family roller coaster will tell the story of Marvel Cave beneath the park, which was a working mine in the 1880s.

MONTANA Missoula: On Aug. 14, the city marked the first year of the Clark Fork River's new public access points, which took a decade of work to connect downtown parks to the water, KPAX reported.

NEBRASKA Lincoln: The Lincoln Airport recently broke a 20-year record for the number of people boarding aircrafts, KOLN reported. Airport officials said the July number was 17,757 and that the airport last reached more than 17,000 in July 2006, according to the outlet.

NEVADA Reno: America Matters Media founder Eddie Floyd and his wife were in critical condition with serious burns suffered while evacuating during a wildfire on Aug. 12. They were fleeing their Wynema Ranch as the Bug Fire burned over 90,000 acres north of Reno.

NEW HAMPSHIRE Portsmouth: Officials and residents gathered Aug. 14 to celebrate the completed installation of sound barrier walls and privacy fencing along Interstate 95. Neighborhood activists and officials fought for at least 30 years to get approval and funding for the project for relief from noise.

NEW JERSEY Sea Isle City: A mysterious discovery along the Jersey shore is raising questions after nearly 30 juvenile sharks were found dead on a Sea Isle City beach, according to multiple media reports.

NEW MEXICO Anthony: U.S. Secretary of Labor Keith Sonderling paid a visit to Seco Spices on Aug. 14 to share that the Trump administration plans to help southern New Mexico's agriculture, including businesses like Seco Spices and Big Sky Dairy.

NEW YORK Poughkeepsie: The Dutchess County Legislature unanimously passed a resolution increasing pay for preschool special education providers. The new local law will increase the reimbursement rate for providers of Preschool Special Education Related Services by $20 per service.

NORTH CAROLINA Wilmington: Bids for Castle Street boat ramp repairs and Riverwalk support have been received by the city. The project is required to preserve critical waterfront infrastructure and ensure ongoing public safety and usability, according to the city.

NORTH DAKOTA Fargo: The United Way of Cass-Clay distributed over 7,000 backpacks full of supplies to kids in need, KVRR reported.

OHIO Cleveland: The Cleveland Clinic is the best hospital in Ohio and among the best in the nation, according to a new ranking. It is the only Ohio hospital named to the Best Hospital Honor Roll in U.S. News & World Report's 2026-27 ranking of the best hospitals, released Aug. 4.

OKLAHOMA Oklahoma City: Gov. Kevin Stitt has directed state agencies to investigate organizations tied to the Islamic faith for connections to terrorism as part of state politicians' latest round of actions targeting Oklahoma Muslims.

OREGON Salem: The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission on Aug. 14 established a first-ever requirement that traps set for bears and cougars must be checked every 56 hours. Before, there was no requirement for how often the traps must be checked.

PENNSYLVANIA Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Attorney General Dave Sunday is suing TikTok, alleging the app lies about the prevalence of harmful content and uses addictive features to keep children and teenagers scrolling for hours at a time.

RHODE ISLAND Providence: One of the last two cheetah sisters at Roger Williams Park Zoo has died. Janga was euthanized after she was diagnosed with gastrointestinal disease, the zoo said in a Facebook post.

SOUTH CAROLINA Greenville: Goodwill plans to open a Retool & Supply hardware store later in August, according to Goodwill Industries of Upstate/Midlands South Carolina. Unlike a traditional Goodwill store, the Retool & Supply store will be filled with donated and gently used tools and hardware items.

SOUTH DAKOTA Sioux Falls: Lawmakers and educators broke ground Aug. 14 on the future site of the James Abdnor Center for Advanced Manufacturing at Southeast Technical College. The center will house programs in advanced manufacturing maintenance technology, advanced manufacturing automation technology and mechanical engineering.

TENNESSEE Nashville: Travelers with a Tennessee driver's license could run into issues at airport security. The Tennessee Department of Safety & Homeland Security said in a Facebook post that "a small number of driver licenses are not being read by TSA." The Aug. 11 post also said anyone experiencing the problem can visit a Driver Services Center and receive a free replacement license.

TEXAS Eldorado: A $35 million financing package is spurring a major expansion at Plantible Foods' Ranchito facility near Eldorado in West Texas, according to a news release. The company said the project will create jobs and significantly expand production capacity.

UTAH St. George: In-N-Out opened its latest location in St. George on Aug. 14, giving residents another place to order a Double-Double. The location seats 160 guests and opened with 40 employees.

VERMONT Springfield: Travel + Leisure named Springfield as one of the best places to retire in New England. The magazine said residents can enjoy a peaceful and affordable place to live while still being able to hike, exercise, and appreciate nature.

VIRGINIA Petersburg: A railroad crossing in Chester long considered to be dangerous is about to get a makeover. In an Aug. 14 statement, Virginia Sens. Mark Warner and Tim Kaine announced that the oddly shaped crossing on Curtis Street is getting $2.3 million for a redo.

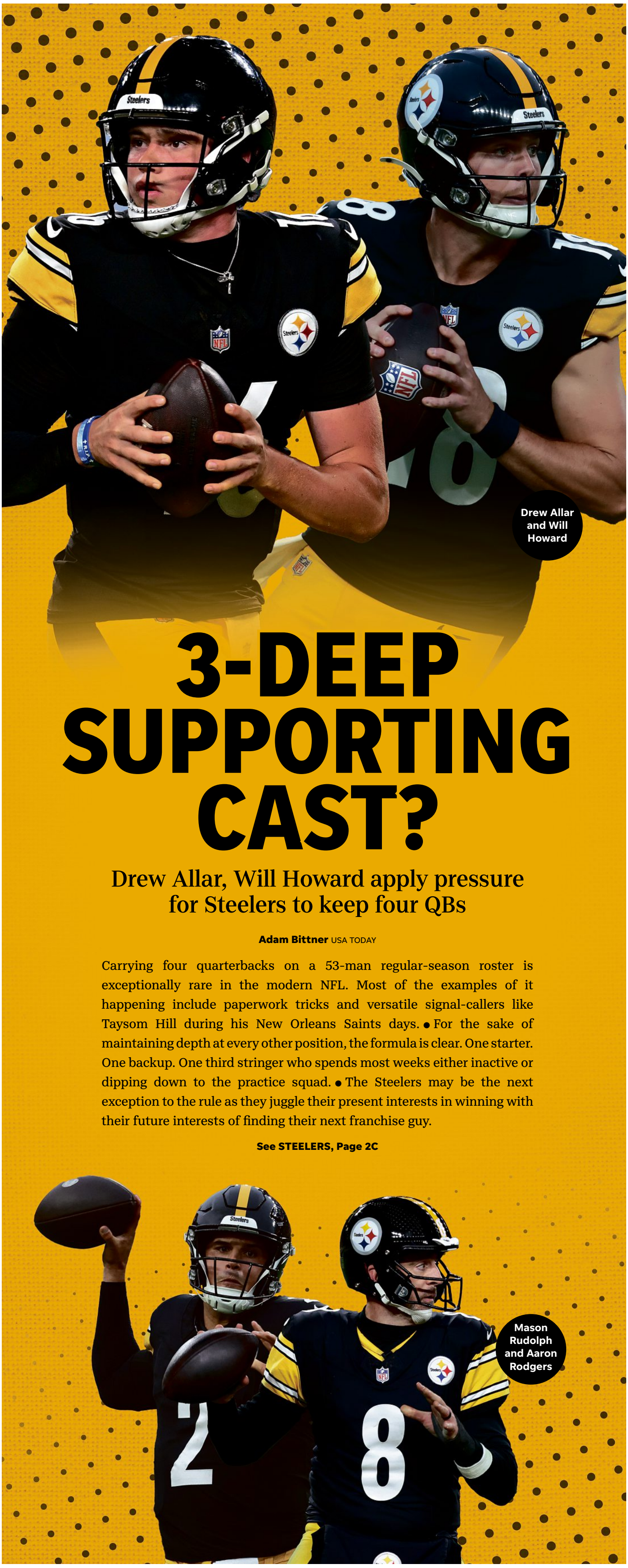
WASHINGTON Olympia: A new analysis from the state Department of Revenue shows Washington's high-earner income tax will be paid by thousands of additional households and produce hundreds of millions of dollars more than previously assumed – if voters don't ditch it this fall, Washington State Standard reported. These larger figures will be in front of voters as they decide whether to repeal the tax in the Nov. 3 election.

WEST VIRGINIA Bridgeport: Students accepted into the aspiring nurse program participated in a signing ceremony put on by the WVU Medicine United Hospital Center, WV News reported.

WISCONSIN Milwaukee: The Harambee neighborhood is getting a new school, as the Carmen Schools of Science and Technology Northwest is officially set to open on Aug 24.

WYOMING Jackson Hole: Reserve Bank of New Zealand Governor Anna Breman is set to attend the annual Jackson Hole Economic Policy Symposium hosted by the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City from Aug. 27-29.

From USA TODAY Network and wire reports



3-DEEP SUPPORTING CAST?

Drew Allar, Will Howard apply pressure for Steelers to keep four QBs

Adam Bittner USA TODAY

Carrying four quarterbacks on a 53-man regular-season roster is exceptionally rare in the modern NFL. Most of the examples of it happening include paperwork tricks and versatile signal-callers like Taysom Hill during his New Orleans Saints days. • For the sake of maintaining depth at every other position, the formula is clear. One starter. One backup. One third stringer who spends most weeks either inactive or dipping down to the practice squad. • The Steelers may be the next exception to the rule as they juggle their present interests in winning with their future interests of finding their next franchise guy.

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PHOTOS BY CHARLES LECLAIRE AND BARRY REEGER/IMAGN IMAGES

Brewers' keeper gets series W vs. LA

Curt Hogg
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
USA TODAY Network

LOS ANGELES – The Milwaukee Brewers won the Narrative World Series this weekend at Dodger Stadium.

Widely chided across the league for not landing Tarik Skubal at the trade deadline, the Brewers, in their first chance to face the left-handed ace wearing Dodger blue, beat him. And they did it with the pitcher they chose to hold onto over a Skubal splash.

Henderson

Right-hander Logan Henderson made another stride as a burgeoning frontline starter at all of 24 years old with his latest – and perhaps greatest – start. Facing the pitcher he was firmly involved in trade discussions with the Detroit Tigers for two weeks ago, Henderson outdueled him with seven innings of three-hit, one-run ball with six strikeouts on Aug. 16 as the Brewers picked up a series win at Dodger Stadium with a 6-2 decision.

It was Henderson's 17th start in the big leagues and his 17th time holding the opponent to three or fewer runs.

"This is who he is," Brewers manager Pat Murphy said. "He's just really consistent. It's not that he's not capable of a dud here and there, but he's

See BREWERS, Page 2C

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Don't sleep on these 10 to make run at playoff

Paul Myerberg
USA TODAY

Here are the Power Four favorites this season: No. 1 Ohio State in the Big Ten, No. 3 Georgia in the SEC, No. 7 Miami in the ACC and No. 12 Texas Tech in the Big 12.

These teams will be in the College Football Playoff, perhaps as the top four seeds, if everything goes according to plan. A quick preseason hint: Things in college football rarely follow the script.

This time last year, Texas was the preseason favorite in the SEC. Penn State was picked to win the Big Ten; Indiana was picked to finish sixth. The ACC favorite was Clemson. (Oops.)

Sleeper teams are ready to pounce in every Football Bowl Subdivision conference. While the preseason favorites lead the way now, these dark-horse contenders look to complicate the playoff picture:

Big Ten: No. 19 Washington

No. 2 Oregon and No. 6 Indiana don't qualify as dark horses behind the Buckeyes, since both are clearly capa-

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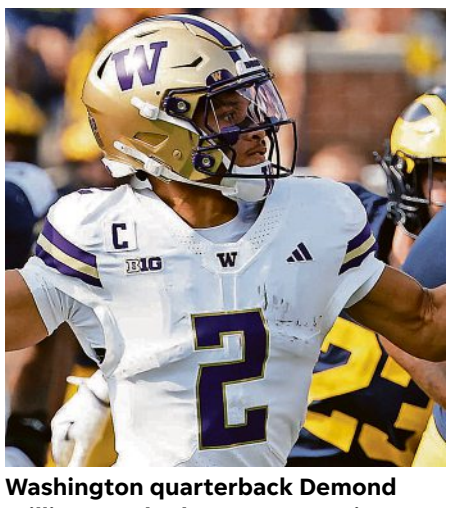
Washington quarterback Demond Williams Jr. had 25 TD passes in 2025.
RICK OSENTOSKI/IMAGN IMAGES

Brewers

Continued from Page 1C

just really consistent. He understands what he's doing."

A hanging changeup to Max Muncy burned Henderson in the fourth inning but proved to be his lone blemish of the game.

At 66 pitches through six innings and with his team nursing a 2-1 lead, it felt like a carbon copy of Henderson's first start on the road trip on Aug. 10. A tiring Henderson normally would have been out of that game after six innings but was sent back out for the seventh with the three top leverage arms available and ultimately allowed the game-deciding two-run homer.

This time, Henderson buckled down, working to strand a leadoff walk and get through seven for the first time in his professional career.

"Really happy to get through seven today," he said. "Left a bitter taste in my mouth last outing. It was really good. It was a really good team win."

This wasn't the most dominant you will see Henderson, who didn't get a single fastball whiff until the sixth and carried a hard-hit rate of nearly 50%, but it was an example of what makes him so effective.

He put together some unimpeachable sequences, especially early on.

In Muncy's first at-bat with a man on in the first, Henderson had him well out in front of a changeup for strike one, then went back to it twice with two strikes to record the swinging strikeout.

With Teoscar Hernández leading off the third, Henderson surprised him with a cutter up for a swinging strike one, then got an uncomfortable swing on a sweeper fouled off for strike two. That was the first sweeper – a pitch he doesn't throw a ton – that Henderson threw all game, but he caught Hernández completely off-guard by doubling up on it for a strikeout.

To cap the inning, Henderson got ahead, 0-2, on Shohei Ohtani with fastballs, showed him a changeup and then went back to an elevated fastball away. Ohtani took it but then flailed at a changeup down and away that tunneled perfectly off an earlier heater in the at-bat.

"His fastball sets up everything," Murphy said. "The changeup was great, and to hold the Dodgers, that lineup, to one run in seven innings was amazing. He was outstanding. Hats off to him."

After running low on the fuel gauge in San Diego, Henderson had plenty in reserve this time around.

Henderson hadn't recorded a single fastball whiff on 28 swings all day when he made the most daring call of the start: challenging Ohtani on one over the plate in their third matchup. He blew it past him at 94.5 mph – his fastest pitch of the day.

The next pitch, Henderson reared back and hit 95.3 mph, his firmest fastball of the season, and got a late swing from Ohtani for a lazy fly to left.

It was the embodiment of convicted pitching.

"I didn't know that. Dang," Henderson said when informed he didn't have a swing and miss on the fastball before that. "I wanted to get him out. I think there's a pretty good lefty pocket after him and I'm sure if I don't get him out there maybe we make a call to the bullpen. That's arguably the best player in the game, so I wanted to get him out. That's where the extra juice came from."

In the seventh inning in San Diego six days prior, Henderson's fastball velocity dipped below 90 mph. He reached 94.7 to Muncy this time and 95 in his last at-bat against Kyle Tucker, who took him to 11 pitches before hitting a dribbler that Henderson made a pouncing play on.

"That is a sign of him taking a step up," Murphy said.

Leveling up his game is all Henderson has done through his first two years in the majors, and this outing showed why the Brewers were wise to ultimately not give him up for Skubal.

It's not that the Brewers were entirely *unwilling* to part with Henderson for Skubal. Ultimately, the idea of giving him away was too much to stomach and the Tigers' request of Henderson plus another prospect was simply too much.

This start showed why.

Since Henderson debuted in April of 2025, the only starting pitchers (minimum 50 innings) with a better strikeout-to-walk ratio are Jacob Misiorowski and Skubal. This year alone, Misiorowski leads baseball with an insane 34% K-BB%. Next is Henderson at 26.3%, ever-so slightly ahead of Skubal.

"There hasn't been a pitch in a situation this season that's looked too big for him," Brewers first baseman Jake Bauers said. "The location of the pitches, the pitchability in terms of mixing his pitches. Knowing when to go to the cutter against lefties, because he doesn't throw it much but there's moments where you're like, 'Oh, damn, I didn't even think about a cutter there.'

"But what impresses me most is the poise. You can feel it. You can feel it on defense. You look at him and he looks rock-steady."

Misiorowski gets the headlines – and rightfully so – but in Henderson the Brewers have a star. They were right to hold onto him, a move that elicited a thank-you directly from the pitcher to president of baseball operations Matt Arnold himself.

Not only do the Brewers have another five years of club control on one of the game's brightest young arms, but who's to say he doesn't even outpitch Skubal post-deadline and into October?

He just did.

Sleepers

Continued from Page 1C

ble of winning the national championship. The Huskies are the pick: UW will be sneaky good in Jedd Fisch's third season and perhaps even better than that if the offseason transfer drama involving burgeoning quarterback star Demond Williams Jr. doesn't distract from his development.

SEC: No. 9 Oklahoma

The Sooners seem capable of climbing above Georgia and No. 4 Texas to win the SEC after reaching the playoff last season. OU has the bones of a nasty defense, will get more from a healthy QB John Mateer and has built up a nice collection of skill talent. Whether the offense can run the ball will determine how far the Sooners go. Last year's team failed to run for more than 103 yards in six of nine games against SEC competition.

ACC: No. 23 Clemson

That Clemson qualifies as an ACC dark horse behind Miami, No. 20 SMU and maybe even unranked Louisville speaks to the program's steady drop from the ranks of the Power Four's most consistently powerful programs. Yet despite the uncertainty around this year's team, the Tigers remain very talented, with solid depth and a potential spark at offensive coordinator in familiar face Chad Morris, leaving the biggest question mark whether quarterback Christopher Vizzina is ready for the starting job.

Big 12: Arizona State

Texas Tech is the overwhelming favorite even without Brendan Sorsby. Just behind are No. 15 BYU, No. 21 Utah and No. 24 Houston. Admittedly, picking Arizona State is a gamble. The Sun Devils look much different from last season and will be very reliant on one of the league's top transfer classes. But ASU won the Big 12 in 2024, won eight games last season and could pop back toward the top of the standings if a totally reworked offensive line gives the skill talent room and time to operate.

American: East Carolina

A strong portal class – maybe you're seeing a theme here – and a very favorable schedule have ECU lurking in the AAC race despite bringing back just three primary starters. The Pirates miss Navy and UTSA, get South Florida at home and have UAB and Charlotte as two of their road games. As a whole, the program has regained its winning style under coach Blake Harrell, who is 14-5 since taking over midway through the 2024 season.

Conference USA: Delaware

Delaware's offense is dynamic enough to overcome a defense that needs to prove it can get off the field on third down and limit explosive plays. In the end, the issues on defense will make it hard to leap ahead of favorites such as Western Kentucky. But the Blue Hens have a strong backfield led by the league's best quarterback in Nick Minicucci.

Mid-American: Central Michigan

We know it won't be UMass, the only winless team in the FBS last season. On paper, Central Michigan might not stack up evenly with preseason MAC favorites Western Michigan and Miami (Ohio), especially with some lingering question marks about the health of its passing game. But the Chippewas made noticeable gains in coach Matt Drinkall's first season and draw the Broncos and RedHawks at home.

Mountain West: North Dakota State

Ignore the fact North Dakota State created one of the great dynasties in NCAA history on the Football Championship Subdivision level before moving up to the Bowl Subdivision this summer. The Bison are still FBS neophytes who will be tested by a tougher and more physically demanding schedule. Are they ready for this test? Whether NDSU can take down the clear favorite in UNLV depends on the strength of its running game behind an offensive line that lost two starters as transfers to Power Four programs.

Pac-12: Washington State

Boise State is about as big a favorite as you'll find in any FBS conference, followed by San Diego State and Fresno State in the new Pac-12. The third Washington State coach in as many years, Kirby Moore will be challenged by the constant roster turnover during these coaching moves. But the Cougars are another dark-horse contender who reloaded with transfer help and have several interesting pieces, including a promising young quarterback in UC Davis transfer Caden Pinnick.

Sun Belt: Marshall

James Madison remains the team to beat in the East Division and Troy in the West. Marshall didn't receive a first-place vote in the preseason media poll but did earn the most preseason all-conference selections, including the Sun Belt's projected offensive player of the year in quarterback Carlos Del Rio-Wilson and another four offensive players who earned a first-team slot. After a 5-7 debut, second-year coach Tony Gibson has to show that he's learned from an uneven 2025.

Steelers

Continued from Page 1C

Even a diminished Aaron Rodgers showed last season that he's the best available option for general manager Omar Khan and coach Mike McCarthy in the here and now. He's arguably the best pure passer in NFL history, and his knowledge of where the ball needs to go was the boost the Steelers needed to win the AFC North in underdog fashion. Even if the physical ability to get it there isn't quite what it was in his prime.

Mason Rudolph has likewise identified himself as the proven backup every team that fancies itself a contender needs. Although the Steelers have never seen fit to give him the starting job long term, despite frequent opportunities to do so since he was drafted in 2018, he's won games when the Steelers needed him to.

In 2023, he rallied together three victories to close the season, salvaging a playoff berth that otherwise might have been a lost season due to injuries and ineffectiveness from Kenny Pickett and Mitch Trubisky. Then last season, he closed out a win that Rodgers couldn't finish the second half of due to injury. And he kept the Steelers in the subsequent game at Chicago.

Will Howard and Drew Allar haven't proved that kind of competence yet. Both were lottery ticket-type NFL draft picks the past couple of years. Allar was selected in the third round this past April while Howard got his call in the sixth round in 2025.

Those types get roster churned through all the time in the NFL. They're not the first-round guys who make or break front office regimes.

And yet, there are good reasons for the Steelers to want to hold onto both, at least long enough to have a proper quarterback competition come this time next year. Especially after both showed out in their respective NFL debuts Aug. 13 against the Green Bay Packers.

After pregame warmups Aug. 13, Steelers quarterbacks Will Howard (18) and Drew Allar (16) got playing time against the Packers. BARRY REEGER/IMAGN IMAGES

Howard is a proven winner with a College Football Playoff national championship under his belt at Ohio State. He's got size that's caused many fans to compare him to Ben Roethlisberger at 6-foot-4, 236 pounds. And there's an edge to his game that's attractive – the Downingtown, Pennsylvania, product famously called out Penn State for not recruiting him to college before taking the Nittany Lions down in Beaver Stadium as a Buckeye. The persistent knock has been his arm strength and ability to make NFL-level throws.

Allar was the opposing quarterback that day and fittingly has the opposite reputation. His arm is probably the best on the team. For a larger guy, he can move like Buffalo Bills star Josh Allen. He has, however, consistently come up short in the big moments. In three years as Penn State's starter, he failed to beat Big Ten big dogs like Ohio State, Oregon and Michigan over a half dozen opportunities. And his interception in the College Football Playoff semifinal against Notre Dame has been a microcosm of his perceived inability to process defenses and coverages.

Aug. 13 against the Packers, Allar grabbed the headlines by totaling three total touchdowns and averaging nearly 12 yards per attempt. Howard got a little lost in that spotlight but still delivered a touchdown drive in the two-minute drill right before halftime.

"It's very reflective of Coach McCarthy and his play calling and his system," Howard said of the quarterbacks' success after the game. "How it's tailored to be friendly for the quarterback. I think it also speaks to coach Tom Arth and coach [Brian Angelichio] everybody in that room. And [Rodgers] helping us out."

How could you not want to see those guys go toe-to-toe for the top job with another year of development under McCarthy, who shepherded Rodgers through many of his best years and got a lot out of Dak Prescott with the Dallas Cowboys?

It's a collision of circumstances where most NFL franchises would probably choose one direction or the other. Go for broke to give Rodgers a John Elway-type ending with Rudolph in tow? Or turn the reins over to the young guys, for better or for worse?

The Steelers aren't most NFL franchises. They consider themselves an annual contender. One that's won six Super Bowls by constantly finding the right balance of present and future.

The mindset is, admittedly, a tad haughty. And one could argue that kind of navel gazing is the reason this franchise has now spent eight seasons in the wilderness without a playoff win despite always being in the playoff mix.

Still, the roles in this quarterback room are distinct enough that it doesn't feel like the mess you'd normally associate with having four guys. Think Shedeur Sanders, Dillon Gabriel, Kenny Pickett and DeShaun Watson in Cleveland last year.

Perhaps that's a good enough reason to keep all of them for as long as you can.

A year is a long time to wait, and anything could happen once the games start to count. If the Steelers are good enough to win a playoff game, maybe someone needs to be cut loose to make room for a linebacker or cornerback. If they're bad, maybe Rodgers calls it a career early or Rudolph becomes expendable as an unnecessary luxury. Maybe they'll be *so* bad that they position themselves to draft a different quarterback early in the pecking order.

In the meantime, you don't have to squint to see the potential benefits of doing something unorthodox come roster cut-down day in a few weeks.

St. Jude is latest Scheffler stroll

Adam Schupak
Golfweek | USA TODAY Network

FedEx St. Jude Championship winner Scottie Scheffler had gone 203 days since his last PGA Tour win. CHRIS DAY/THE (MEMPHIS) COMMERCIAL APPEAL

Scottie Scheffler enjoyed a walk in the park in Memphis on Sunday.

The world No. 1 ended his victory drought in convincing fashion Aug. 16, shooting 4-under 66 at TPC Southwind and winning the FedEx St. Jude Championship by eight over Si Woo Kim.

"I wanted to win so bad, but Scottie played so good," Kim said.

Did he ever. It's almost laughable to say Scheffler's victory snapped a drought of hoisting trophies on the PGA Tour but his previous longest stretch between first and second victories had been 28 days. Scheffler captured The American Express in January and had gone 203 days since tasting victory. That included five runner-up finishes during that stretch, tied for the most in the last 40 years on the PGA Tour with six other players.

Scheffler, 30, notched his 21st tour title, matching the career win total of the likes of World Golf Hall of Fame members Davis Love III and Lanny Wadkins, and became the third youngest to do so behind Tiger Woods and Jack Nicklaus.

On a day when the temperature approached 100 degrees and felt even hotter, Scheffler got off to a sluggish start with a bogey at the par-5 third hole after his greenside bunker shot splashed out, hit a sprinkler head, took a big bounce and rolled into a water hazard. Before taking his penalty drop, Scheffler said to caddie Ted Scott, "When is this going to stop happening?"

"I don't know, man," Scott replied.

But Scheffler refused to let it stop his return to the winner's circle. He bounced back with a birdie at the fifth and then the golf gods evened the score at No. 6 when he pulled his tee shot left but got a fortuitous bounce to the first cut of rough. He took advantage, making a birdie to extend his lead.

It also didn't hurt that none of his nearest chasing competitors had their best stuff. Good friend Sam Burns (T-3), who shot 62 on Saturday, and Sungjae Im (T-5), the only player to move into the top 50 and advance to this week's BMW Championship, stumbled to 73 and 74, respectively, in the final round.

"I would have had to play pretty much a perfect round of golf to have a chance today, and I didn't come close to that," Burns said. "Yeah, he played exactly how I expected him to."

Scheffler made a driver switch this past week that could stick and displayed his usual ball-striking excellence, ranking third in strokes gained: tee to green and second in SG: approach in the field for the week, but it was his putter that was the story of the week. He ranked first in strokes gained: putting for the week, the best performance of his career in that category, and when he does that, it's not a fair fight. He birdied the first five holes on Friday en route to 9-under 61, which included two bogeys, and poured in putts of 20 feet at No. 11 and 21 feet at No. 13 and the rout was on. He added another birdie at 16 to solidify his winning total of 17-under 263. As a measure of his dominance, Scheffler was the only player to finish in double-digits for the week.

Scheffler made his pro debut in Memphis in 2018 and had finished T-4 and T-3 the previous two years at TPC Southwind. The win means Scheffler owns multiple victories in each of his five seasons on tour and marked his 11th straight win when holding the outright 54-hole lead. It should help Scheffler make a case for being the tour's Player of the Year, an honor he's chasing for the fifth straight time.

Scheffler banked $3.6 million to improve to No. 2 on the tour's career money list, passing Rory McIlroy, who finished 66th. Scheffler is now just $1,034,755 behind Woods.

"I felt like a week like this was coming," Scheffler said. "I felt like I was on repeat all year just being like, 'Hey, I'm playing solid. I'm close.' It feels good to be answering some different questions at the end of this week."

24-year-old earns 10th LPGA title

Beth Ann Nichols
Golfweek | USA TODAY Network

Jeeno Thitikul reached the double-digit mark for career wins after her victory at The Standard Portland Classic on Aug. 16. Now the eighth LPGA player to reach 10 wins before age 24, Thitikul held off several players from her own homeland to collect the $300,000 prize.

Thitikul

It marks the 23-year-old's third victory of the season. "I would say every win it's means [because of] the sacrifice that we put in, the work we put in," said Thitikul. "I mean – you know, I've had a time that I doubt, like, what is going on in my games, and then, when you get it, you're just like, wow, this is what you're waiting for."

Thitikul began the day two back at Columbia Edgewater Country Club and closed with a 64. Her ball-striking was superb, but it was her putter than sealed it for her down the stretch, edging compatriots Arpichaya Yubol (67) and Chanettee Wannasaen (63) by one stroke.

Cink wins Boeing in playoff

Stewart Cink birdied the first playoff hole to defeat Spaniard Miguel Angel Jimenez and win the Boeing Classic on Aug. 16 in Snoqualmie, Washington.

Cink started the day four off the pace and rallied with a 7-under-par 65 to finish 12-under 204 for the event. Jimenez did him one better with a 64, but when they replayed the par-5 18th hole, Jimenez placed his third shot in a greenside bunker, giving Cink the upper hand to win with a close-range birdie putt.

It marked Cink's fifth 2026 win.

– Field Level Media | Reuters

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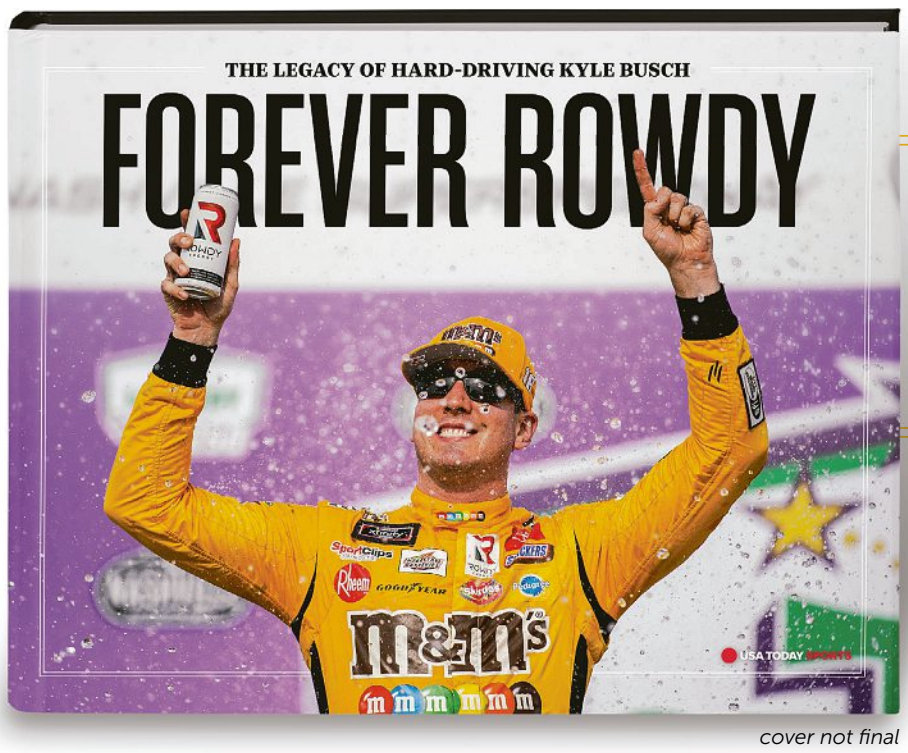

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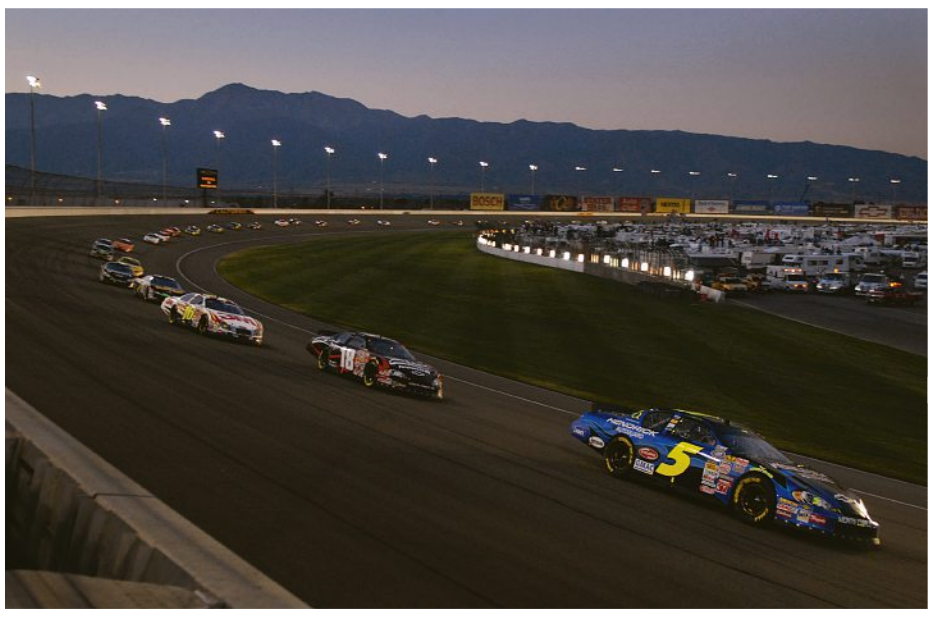

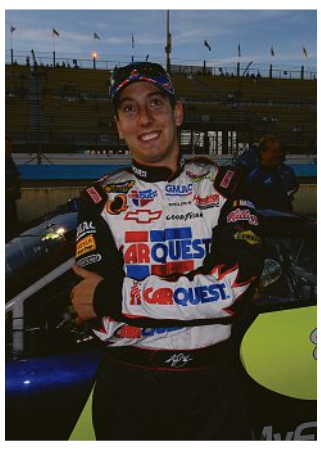

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INDYCAR SERIES

Ericsson wins first Markham race after brush-up

Zion Brown
The Indianapolis Star
USA TODAY Network

IndyCar driver Marcus Ericsson celebrates after winning the Ontario Honda Dealers Indy at Streets of Markham on Aug. 16, his first victory since the 2023 season opener. DAN HAMILTON/IMAGN IMAGES

MARKHAM, Ontario – Andretti Global's day at IndyCar's Ontario Honda Dealers Indy at Markham almost ended in agony.

After Kyle Kirkwood wrecked out of the 90-lap race on lap 54, Will Power and Marcus Ericsson stayed toward the front of the pack. But as Ericsson tried to overtake Power for third place on lap 82, the teammates made contact in the tricky Turn 5 hairpin of the new street circuit.

Both cars lost pace while chasing Alex Palou, and Ericsson was dangerously close to hitting the wall before passing Power on the inside. Power didn't realize his teammate was making that move, and he planned to let Ericsson – who had fresher tires and more fuel – pass him on the upcoming straightaway.

"It was miscommunication 'cause the team came on and said, 'Marcus is really quick, he's coming,' " Power said after the race. "I said, 'OK, tell him I'll let him go on the back straight so I can stay close to Palou.' He didn't get the message, or it wasn't quick enough for him. Yeah, miscommunication. I didn't even look in my mirror. I just turned."

Ericsson acknowledged that the mistake was on his end, not Power's.

"I was really eager to get by and sort of hunt down the leaders because I really felt like I had the pace to win at that point," Ericsson said. "It's all good. We talked about it. We touched, but we were all square, we were side by side. There's no hard feelings."

Despite the error that could've led to none of Andretti Global's three cars finishing the race, Ericsson and Power came away from it clean. Both drivers got by Palou, and Ericsson passed then-leader Romain Grosjean on Turn 6 of the 12-turn course on lap 86; Ericsson never surrendered that lead to come away victorious in a chaotic, six-caution race.

The win was Ericsson's first in three seasons with Andretti Global. The 35-year-old Swedish driver signed an extension to return to the team Aug. 6, and he rewarded them 10 days later.

After finishing 15th in the IndyCar championship in 2024 and 20th in 2025, Ericsson sits ninth this year with four races to go. (He'd be near the top five if not for mechanical failures at Long Beach and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway road course.) Since the season began, Ericsson has returned to driving like the guy who won the 2022 Indianapolis 500 and three other races for Chip Ganassi Racing from 2020 to 2023.

"I didn't recognize myself in the last year," Ericsson said after winning the pole for the Grand Prix of Arlington, where he finished fourth. "I didn't drive with confidence. I didn't drive aggressive. I was just not myself. I've worked really hard to be back at the level I know I can be at."

Ericsson spent the offseason regaining the confidence that made Andretti Global want to pry him away from CGR in the first place. He raced a GT3 sportscar last December with his younger brother, Hampus, in Malaysia before returning to a sportscar for IMSA's 24 Hours of Daytona in January. He spent more time in Andretti Global's shop to grow comfortable with the team that has gone through personnel changes since Michael Andretti sold a majority stake to TWG Motorsports following the 2024 season.

The diligence that Ericsson and Andretti Global have gone through to make this partnership work is coming to fruition. Six months ago, it wasn't clear if Ericsson would be on this team in 2027, but his performance – even before Markham – made re-signing him an obvious choice.

"You can't, after a season like last year, sit around and think hopefully next year will be better," Ericsson said. "You have to put in hours with the team, with the personnel, with yourself. That's where I really did that over the winter and that's been paying off."

Andretti Global's three drivers have developed a chemistry that made continuity for 2027 a goal of its leadership, spearheaded by TWG Motorsports CEO Dan Towriss, Andretti Global President Jill Gregory and team principal Ron Ruzewski.

Ruzewski, who spent 20 years at Team Penske before being fired last May amid the team's Indy 500 cheating scandal, doubles as the strategist for Power. While both drivers were battling to get by Palou and Grosjean, Ruzewski said there were no objections to letting Ericsson pass Power.

"I think the (timing) stands are working well together," Ruzewski said. "There's no egos. Right now, it's working really well."

After Kirkwood won in Arlington, Andretti Global joins Arrow McLaren (Pato O'Ward and Christian Lundgaard) as the only teams to have multiple drivers win a race this year. Andretti Global is the last team to win an IndyCar championship beside CGR and Team Penske, which it did in 2012 with Ryan Hunter-Reay. As Palou has extended his championship lead to 133 points over Kirkwood, CGR appears to have another on the way, but Ruzewski feels Andretti Global could close the gap next year with another season of this driver trio.

"My experience before Andretti was all about continuity," Ruzewski said. "I learned a lot of lessons from that; trying to bring that here. Now it's just trying to give everybody a little bit of a bump, a little bit of a nudge to really take everything to the next level. I think we're in a good spot going into the rest of the season. Looking forward to '27."

Markham was Ericsson's eighth top-10 finish of the year and his third in a row. For him, this moment was a matter of when, not if.

"I don't see this as sort of a surprise that we're sitting here winning," Ericsson said. "I feel like that's been trending that way. I've been telling my guys the last couple of races, we keep doing what we're doing now, it's going to be a matter of time, not a matter of if or not, because we've really been strong every race here for a long time."

Ericsson – who said he's "driving better than I've ever been in IndyCar" – is having a resurgence that many felt wasn't possible after 2025. The synergy that he and Andretti Global worked to build propelled Ericsson to a win in Markham.

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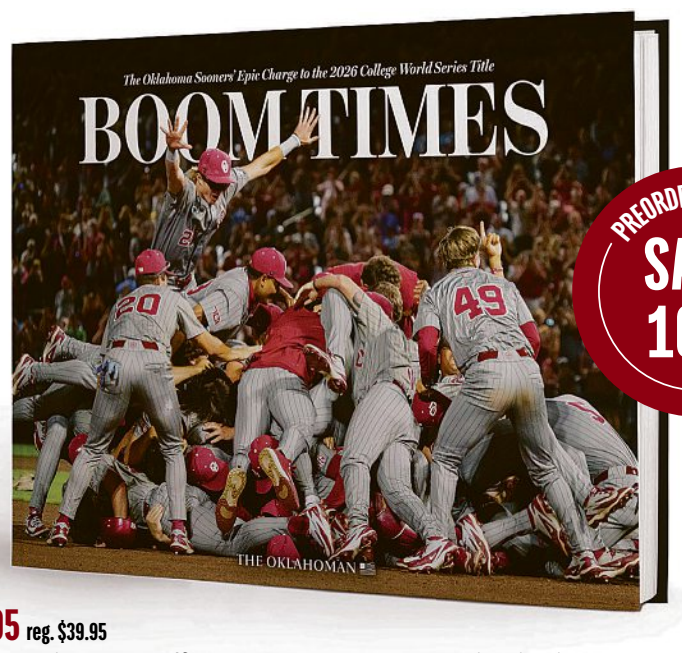

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THE OKLAHOMAN

AUTO RACING

Larson wins dirt race post-NASCAR mad dash

Mitchell Northam
USA TODAY

RICHMOND, VA – As it turns out, Kyle Larson is fast on paved asphalt tracks, fast on dirt, fast on his feet and fast through the air.

After crossing the finish line sixth in the Cook Out 400 on Saturday night Aug. 15 at Richmond Raceway, the reigning NASCAR Cup Series champion quickly unbuckled from his safety harnesses, hopped out of his No. 5 Chevrolet and bolted toward his Hendrick Motorsports hauler.

By the time reporters got to the garage, Larson was already on his way to the airport, getting ready to fly to Iowa for the Knoxville Nationals – arguably the most prestigious competition in all of dirt racing.

NASCAR's race at Richmond ended around 10:16 p.m. ET.

About four hours later, Larson was standing atop his No. 57 sprint car in victory lane in Knoxville, Iowa, smiling and waving the checkered flag as fireworks went off behind him.

Larson, who has twice attempted the Indianapolis 500 and Coca-Cola 600 double, pulled off an incredible and improbable feat by notching a top-10 win at Richmond and then winning the Knoxville Nationals for the fourth time.

"It's just wild how I'm here tonight," Larson said. "Huge thank-you to everyone at Hendrick Motorsports. ...

"A fourth Knoxville Nationals in a fashion like this is unbelievable. It feels like a little bit of a dream right now."

Larson had initially resigned himself to not being able to make it to Iowa. The 34-year-old's career in NASCAR's Cup Series has always come before his side expeditions in dirt racing, and it looked like the schedules weren't going to align.

But the folks at Hendrick Motorsports saw the forecast for the Knoxville Nationals and put a plan in place. Mother Nature played her part and dumped rain on the track, delaying the start of the race by about four hours.

"(Hendrick Motorsports president) Jeff Andrews was very instrumental in

Larson

helping us get a plan laid out," Larson's NASCAR crew chief Cliff Daniels said. "I'd much rather have a plan in place that we can say no to than to have nothing prepared. We were persistent because we knew that if we can get him there, he can probably do something special."

With 114 laps to go at Richmond and Larson running 14th, Daniels buzzed into Larson's in-car radio.

"Knoxville has not even started hot laps yet. Big delay for the race," Daniels said. "Don't know if it's tomorrow yet, but they're way behind, just so you know."

A surprised Larson replied, "Knoxville?"

"Yeah. We're working on a plan for you," Daniels said.

After completing 400 laps at Richmond – where he notched a much-needed top-10 result, his first since June 28 at Sonoma – he caught a ride to the Richmond airport and then flew into Pella Municipal Airport.

At one point late Saturday, his jet was the most tracked flight on the site Flight Radar with more than 16,000 viewers.

Larson landed and got a police escort to the track with time to spare before the start of the race where he was the pole-sitter.

Larson led all 50 laps to win his 16th race at Knoxville and a $200,000 prize. Another former NASCAR driver, Kasey Kahne, placed third.

"It's extremely surreal," Larson said after his victory. "It just means a lot that they love dirt racing as much as I do and they support it. Everybody at Hendrick Motorsports to allow me to do this while they're paying me a lot of money to (race in NASCAR) for a living and try to produce results for them and win championships is pretty amazing."

Dirt racing is where Larson began his career in motorsports, beginning at the age of 7 in his native California. His children are racing on dirt now too.

With two races left until NASCAR's postseason Chase begins, Larson is eighth in the points standings after his strong finish at Richmond.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Mulling 6 bold choices for firings, playoff

Blake Toppmeyer
Columnist
USA TODAY NETWORK

After going 13-1 in 2023, Florida State under coach Mike Norvell has gone 2-10 and 5-7 the last two seasons.
MATT PENDLETON/IMAGN IMAGES

Nebraska coach Matt Rhule recently let us in on a little secret.

"College football is as great as it's ever been," Rhule said.

Say it louder, coach, so your persistently whining peers might hear it.

College football coaches love to complain. They grumble about all the things "broken" in their sport, even as they break, ignore or bemoan existing rules. The sky-is-falling noise extends to athletic directors, chancellors and university presidents. It's even found a home in Washington, DC.

And yet just last season, the forever-a-doormat Indiana Hoosiers won the national championship, and a team with an ex-Division II quarterback reached the College Football Playoff semifinals. Pretty cool, right?

Sure, the playoff's first round fizzled, but how about Fernando Mendoza's gutsy fourth-down run in the national championship gam, or the white-knuckle Miami-Ole Miss finish in the semifinals, or the Georgia-Ole Miss thriller of a Sugar Bowl? Pure theater. Let's have a another dose.

Before kickoff arrives, let me serve six bold (but not crazy) possibilities for the 2026 season.

1. Mike Norvell of Florida State will be the first coach fired

Why this counts as a bold take: The hot seat is crowded. It includes Luke Fickell (Wisconsin), Dave Aranda (Baylor), Mike Locksley (Maryland), Bill Belichick (North Carolina) and Shane Beamer (South Carolina).

Why this take isn't crazy: Florida State has seven wins combined the last two seasons after going 13-1 in 2023. That's beyond hot seat terrain. That's the scalding zone, and we learned FSU sniffed around Lane Kiffin last year. It couldn't lure in Kiffin, but it'll have to face the buyout music if Norvell can't reinject momentum.

Norvell's future will be in the hands of another transfer-laden roster, including his fourth starting quarterback in as many years.

Unlike last fall, when multiple premier jobs opened, Florida State could be one of the hottest openings this year. Plant your flag first?

College football firings come sooner than ever. The coaching carousel started spinning in September last year.

Four of Florida State's first seven opponents are ranked in the preseason US LBM Coaches Poll. That schedule positions Norvell for a swift firing.

Norvell told The Athletic he doesn't "fear failure." Why should he fear failure? If FSU fires Norvell, he'll be owed more than $45 million in failure money. Nothing to fear. Better question: Do opponents have any reason to fear the spear? FSU starves for national relevance, making the fearless man in Tallahassee the top candidate to be the first coach fired.

2. The Big Ten will produce a fourth consecutive national champion

Why this counts as a bold take: Despite the Big Ten's recent playoff dominance, the SEC has the most ranked teams of any conference, and Notre Dame is also a top championship contender.

Why this take isn't crazy: Ohio State, Oregon and Indiana are frontline national title candidates. Oregon and Indiana are stacked on defense, and they'll start talented veteran quarterbacks. Ohio State's offense features not one, not two, but three Heisman-capable performers among the trio of Julian Sayin, Jeremiah Smith and Bo Jackson.

In the SEC, the new rally cry is: Our worst teams are better than your worst teams.

Maybe, but national championships are awarded to the best teams, and the Big Ten has the deepest collection of top teams.

3. Georgia will be the SEC's last team standing in the playoff

Why this counts as a bold take: Texas' roster is second to none in the SEC. Also, Georgia hasn't won a playoff game since 2022. The playoff bracket could feature several SEC teams, leaving no shortage of options for last team standing.

Why this take isn't crazy: Among the SEC's playoff contenders, Georgia enjoys the easiest schedule. That gives the Bulldogs a good shot at winning the conference and securing a first-round bye.

No SEC team returns more starters than Georgia. That includes several third-year players who were blue-chippers as part of Kirby Smart's No. 1-ranked signing class in 2024.

Oh, and let's not forget quarterback Gunner Stockton. He's Mr. Clutch in the fourth quarter. That's a recipe to be the last team standing from the SEC.

4. A Big Ten quarterback will win the Heisman Trophy again

Why this counts as a bold take: Heismans are rare for Big Ten quarterbacks.

Indiana's Fernando Mendoza became the first Big Ten quarterback to win the award since Ohio State's Troy Smith in 2006.

Why this take isn't crazy: Close your eyes and picture Big Ten football. What do you see? Corn-fed offensive linemen, bruising tailbacks, 4 yards and a cloud of dust? That imagery needs refreshed. The past few years, Big Ten quarterback play transformed from an anchor to an asset. Multiple stars return, including Sayin (Ohio State), Dante Moore (Oregon), Jayden Maiava (Southern Cal) and Demond Williams Jr. (Washington). Indiana reloaded with one of the Big 12's best, TCU transfer Josh Hoover.

Even as Arch Manning and CJ Carr gobble up preseason Heisman buzz, the best collection of QBs resides in the Big Ten, and the conference's media partners will shamelessly power the hype machine for one of those to succeed Mendoza as Heisman winner.

5. No team will enter the playoff undefeated

Why this counts as a bold take: In the 10 years of the four-team playoff, plus the two years of the 12-team playoff, only once did the playoff bracket include no undefeated teams. That happened in 2017, when the bracket had four one-loss teams.

Why this take isn't crazy: The SEC made its schedule tougher by tacking on a ninth conference game. That narrows the avenue to an undefeated season. The Big Ten's top tier is becoming more and more crowded. Ohio State's schedule is stacked, starting in Week 2 against Texas. The Buckeyes will play Indiana and Oregon, too, both of the Big Ten's other undefeated contenders.

Big 12 favorite Texas Tech has only one scheduled opponent ranked in the preseason coaches poll. That's No. 24 Houston. So, undefeated potential for the Red Raiders? Perhaps, but how steady will Texas Tech starting quarterback Will Hammond be? He was supposed to be Brendan Sorsby's backup.

Miami and Notre Dame are candidates to enter the playoff undefeated, but they play each other in November, ensuring a loss for at least one of them, although the winner of that game wouldn't be a bad bet to go undefeated.

Six teams in the preseason top 25 received multiple first-place votes. That reflects college football's growing parity and its shrinking path to being undefeated when the playoff arrives.

6. A three-loss team will make the playoff field

Why this counts as a bold take: The selection committee has never selected a 9-3 team.

Why this take isn't crazy: Contrary to the refrain you hear in the South, the playoff selection committee does indeed value the SEC and its strength of schedule. The SEC's eight bids across two years of the 12-team playoff top all conferences.

SEC coaches are skeptical that an extra conference game will benefit their playoff interests, but it should increase the possibility of a 9-3 team qualifying for the bracket. Consider Texas. The Longhorns will play six preseason top-20 teams. If they lose a close game to Ohio State in Week 2 and go 7-2 in the SEC, couldn't that be a playoff résumé?

Or, what about Oklahoma? The Sooners will play four preseason top-10 teams, including Georgia and Texas in the first half of the season. A 9-3 Sooners resume might be worth a look.

A nine-game conference schedule means more losses are coming to SEC teams. It also might mean the SEC's last-team-in now comes with a 9-3 record.

Blake Toppmeyer is the USA TODAY Network's senior national college football columnist. Email at BToppmeyer@gannett.com and follow him on X @btoppmeyer

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Sourcewell, a State of Minnesota local government unit and service cooperative, is requesting proposals for Unified Communications and Contact Center Solutions to result in a procurement solution for use by its Participating Entities.

Sourcewell Participating Entities include thousands of governmental, higher education, K-12 education, nonprofit, tribal government, and other public agencies located in the United States and Canada.

Sourcewell encourages the use of Small, Minority-owned, Women's Business Enterprise, Veteran-owned Business Enterprise (S/M/WBE/VBE) suppliers both as prime and subcontractors and encourages the participation of these suppliers in the solicitation process.

A full copy of the Request for Proposals can be found on the Sourcewell Procurement Portal https://proportal.sourcewell-mn.gov.

Only proposals submitted through the Sourcewell Procurement Portal will be considered.

Proposals are due no later than September 29, 2026, at 3:30 p.m. Central Time, and late proposals will not be considered.

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Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit #16 (CSIU) is accepting sealed bids for its **PEPPM 2027 Product Line Bid** and **PEPPM 2027Apple Bid**, from bidders for technology equipment, software, services, supplies, and furniture to local educational agencies and other eligible public agencies in Pennsylvania and optionally other states for the PEPPM Cooperative Purchasing Program.

Bid Due Date: October 8, 2026, 3:00 pm ET
Submission: Electronic bids at www.epylon.com
Public Bid Opening: October 8, 2026, 3:00 pm ET, CSIU, 90 Lawton Lane, Milton, PA 17847. CSIU reserves the right to broadcast the opening of bids via teleconference or video conference, in lieu of an in-person meeting.

Registration: Required at www.epylon.com (no fee)

Details and Bid Documents available at: www.peppm.org/bids

Bid Withdrawal: No bidder may withdraw its bid for 90 days after the bid opening date.

Installation of certain products purchased under the contracts may be subject to applicable prevailing wage laws and rates. Reference is made to the prevailing minimum wage rates applicable to such installation.

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FOR THE RECORD

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MLB

AMERICAN LEAGUE
East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Tampa Bay	74	49	.602	–
N.Y. Yankees	69	55	.556	5½
Boston	66	58	.532	8½
Baltimore	61	63	.492	13½
Toronto	61	65	.484	14½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Chi. White Sox	65	58	.528	–
Detroit	60	64	.484	5½
Minnesota	60	65	.480	6
Cleveland	60	65	.480	6
Kansas City	51	74	.408	15

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	63	62	.504	–
Texas	61	64	.488	2
Seattle	59	66	.472	4
Athletics	49	75	.395	13½
L.A. Angels	49	76	.392	14

NATIONAL LEAGUE
East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	74	50	.597	–
Philadelphia	67	58	.536	7½
Miami	64	61	.512	10½
Washington	60	66	.476	15
N.Y. Mets	56	69	.448	18½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	77	48	.616	–
Chicago Cubs	72	53	.576	5
St. Louis	63	61	.508	13½
Pittsburgh	61	65	.484	16½
Cincinnati	59	64	.480	17

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Dodgers	74	51	.592	–
San Diego	67	58	.536	7
Arizona	66	59	.528	8
San Francisco	51	73	.411	22½
Colorado	50	74	.403	23½

Sunday's Scores
Baltimore 10, Tampa Bay 2
Atlanta 5, Arizona 3
Pittsburgh 8, Boston 3
N.Y. Yankees 4, Toronto 3, 10 innings
Chi. White Sox 7, Detroit 5
Miami 7, Cincinnati 1
San Diego 5, Cleveland 0
N.Y. Mets 4, Washington 3
Philadelphia 7, Minnesota 5
St. Louis 11, Chicago Cubs 4
Athletics 5, Texas 2
Colorado 13, San Francisco 7
Kansas City 3, L.A. Angels 0
Milwaukee 6, L.A. Dodgers 2
Seattle 3, Houston 2

Monday's Games
St. Louis at Cincinnati
Baltimore at Tampa Bay
St. Louis at Cincinnati
Miami at Philadelphia
Detroit at Pittsburgh
Arizona at Boston
San Diego at N.Y. Mets
Atlanta at Minnesota
Athletics at Kansas City
Chi. White Sox at Chicago Cubs
L.A. Dodgers at Colorado

Tuesday's Games
N.Y. Yankees at Baltimore, 6:35 p.m.
St. Louis at Cincinnati, 6:40 p.m.
Toronto at Tampa Bay, 6:40 p.m.
San Francisco at Cleveland, 6:40 p.m.
Miami at Philadelphia, 6:40 p.m.
Detroit at Pittsburgh, 6:40 p.m.
Arizona at Boston, 7:10 p.m.
San Diego at N.Y. Mets, 7:10 p.m.
Atlanta at Minnesota, 7:40 p.m.
Athletics at Kansas City, 7:40 p.m.
Seattle at Milwaukee, 7:40 p.m.
Washington at Texas, 8:05 p.m.
Chi. White Sox at Chicago Cubs, 8:05 p.m.
L.A. Angels at Houston, 8:10 p.m.
L.A. Dodgers at Colorado, 8:40 p.m.

Wednesday's Games
Detroit at Pittsburgh, 12:35 p.m.
San Diego at N.Y. Mets, 1:10 p.m.
Atlanta at Minnesota, 1:40 p.m.
Chi. White Sox at Chicago Cubs, 2:20 p.m.
Arizona at Boston, 4:10 p.m.
Miami at Philadelphia, 6:05 p.m.
N.Y. Yankees at Baltimore, 6:35 p.m.
St. Louis at Cincinnati, 6:40 p.m.
Toronto at Tampa Bay, 6:40 p.m.
San Francisco at Cleveland, 6:40 p.m.
Athletics at Kansas City, 7:40 p.m.
Seattle at Milwaukee, 7:40 p.m.
Washington at Texas, 8:05 p.m.
L.A. Angels at Houston, 8:10 p.m.
L.A. Dodgers at Colorado, 8:40 p.m.

SOCCER

MLS
EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Nashville	13	2	4	43	39	15
Inter Miami CF	11	3	5	38	46	36
Chicago	10	6	2	32	34	24
New England	9	7	3	30	29	25
Charlotte FC	8	7	4	28	32	28
Cincinnati	7	6	6	27	46	45
NY City FC	7	7	5	26	33	27
NY Red Bulls	7	8	4	25	30	41
D.C. United	5	5	9	24	27	30
Orlando City	6	10	3	21	31	48
Columbus	5	9	5	20	27	31
Toronto FC	4	7	8	20	26	33
Philadelphia	5	10	4	19	28	35
CF Montreal	4	10	5	17	25	36
Atlanta	4	12	3	15	21	34

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Houston	11	6	2	35	28	24
Vancouver	10	3	4	34	38	17
Los Angeles FC	10	6	4	34	35	20
San Jose	10	6	3	33	38	27
FC Dallas	8	5	6	30	34	26
Saint Louis	8	6	5	29	27	25
Real Salt Lake	8	6	4	28	30	26
Colorado	8	10	1	25	29	25
Minnesota	6	6	7	25	21	26
Portland	7	9	3	24	34	35
Seattle	7	7	3	24	20	22
San Diego FC	6	7	6	24	33	29
LA Galaxy	5	8	7	22	24	30
Austin FC	4	10	5	17	23	38
Sporting KC	4	13	2	14	18	48

Note: Three points for win, one point for tie.

Sunday's Scores
Chicago 2, Portland 1
NY City FC 2, Philadelphia 3
Austin FC 1, FC Dallas 2
Seattle 0, Vancouver 2

Wednesday's Games
Charlotte FC at Toronto FC, 7:30 p.m.
New England at D.C. United, 7:30 p.m.
Inter Miami CF at Philadelphia, 7:30 p.m.
NY City FC at Cincinnati, 7:30 p.m.
Nashville at NY Red Bulls, 7:30 p.m.
Chicago at Orlando City, 7:30 p.m.
CF Montreal at Columbus, 7:30 p.m.
Saint Louis at Sporting KC, 8 p.m.
Atlanta at Minnesota, 8:30 p.m.
Austin FC at Seattle, 9:30 p.m.
Los Angeles FC at Colorado, 9:30 p.m.
FC Dallas at Real Salt Lake, 9:30 p.m.
San Diego FC at Portland, 10:30 p.m.
San Jose at LA Galaxy, 10:30 p.m.
Houston at Vancouver, 10:30 p.m.

Saturday's Games
Seattle at Cincinnati, 7:30 p.m.
LA Galaxy at CF Montreal, 7:30 p.m.
Real Salt Lake at Orlando City, 7:30 p.m.
Toronto FC at Inter Miami CF, 7:30 p.m.
D.C. United at Charlotte FC, 7:30 p.m.
Chicago at NY Red Bulls, 7:30 p.m.
Houston at Saint Louis, 8:30 p.m.
Philadelphia at Austin FC, 8:30 p.m.
Columbus at Nashville, 8:30 p.m.
FC Dallas at Vancouver, 9:30 p.m.
Colorado at San Diego FC, 10:30 p.m.
Portland at Los Angeles FC, 10:30 p.m.
Minnesota at San Jose, 10:30 p.m.

English Premier League
Friday's Game
Arsenal vs. Coventry City, 3 p.m.

Saturday's Games
Hull City vs. Manchester United, 7:30 a.m.
Everton vs. Crystal Palace, 10 a.m.
Ipswich Town vs. Sunderland, 10 a.m.
Nottingham Forest vs. Leeds United, 10 a.m.
Brentford vs. Tottenham, 12:30 p.m.

Sunday's Games
Brighton & Hove Albion vs. Aston Villa, 9 a.m.
Manchester City vs. Bournemouth, 9 a.m.
Newcastle United vs. Liverpool, 11:30 a.m.

Monday's Game
Fulham vs. Chelsea, 3 p.m.

NWSL

	W	L	D	Pts	GF	GA
Gotham	13	3	4	43	26	13
Washington	11	5	4	37	30	18
Utah	11	6	3	36	35	23
Portland	10	6	4	34	34	29
San Diego	10	7	3	33	25	21
North Carolina	9	7	3	30	34	29
Kansas City	9	8	3	30	31	28
Seattle	8	7	3	27	23	23
Angel City	7	7	4	25	27	20
Denver	6	7	6	24	25	25
Houston	6	8	5	23	23	28
Orlando	7	11	2	23	24	31
Louisville	6	11	2	20	28	36
Boston	5	10	5	20	23	32
Bay	5	10	4	19	20	27
Chicago	4	14	1	13	9	34

Note: Three points for win, one point for tie.

Sunday's Scores
Houston 3, North Carolina 2
Angel City 1, Washington 1

Wednesday's Games
Seattle at Louisville, 6:30 p.m.
Chicago at Houston, 8 p.m.

Friday's Game
Utah at San Diego, 10 p.m.

Saturday's Games
Seattle at Kansas City, 6:30 p.m.
Boston at North Carolina, 7:30 p.m.
Denver at Portland, 8:45 p.m.

Sunday's Games
Louisville at Chicago, 2 p.m.
Orlando at Washington, 4 p.m.
Houston at Bay, 6 p.m.
Gotham at Angel City, 8 p.m.

WNBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Indiana	23	12	.657	–
Atlanta	21	13	.618	1½
N.Y. Liberty	22	14	.611	1½
Washington	20	14	.588	2½
Chicago	13	22	.371	10
Toronto	10	23	.303	12
Connecticut	8	25	.242	14

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	29	7	.806	–
Golden State	24	9	.727	3½
Las Vegas	24	12	.667	5
Dallas	20	15	.571	8½
Portland	15	20	.429	13½
Phoenix	13	23	.361	16
L.A. Sparks	12	22	.353	16
Seattle	7	30	.189	22½

Sunday's Scores
Chicago 82, Seattle 80
Indiana 95, Atlanta 91
Portland 88, Phoenix 85

Monday's Game
Dallas at Golden State

Tuesday's Games
L.A. Sparks vs Connecticut at Boston, 7 p.m.
Indiana at Toronto, 7 p.m.
N.Y. Liberty at Chicago Sky, 9 p.m.
Atlanta at Las Vegas, 9 p.m.

Wednesday's Games
Toronto at Washington, 7:30 p.m.
Minnesota at Golden State, 10 p.m.

CFL

EAST DIVISION

	W	L	Pct	PF	PA
Montreal	8	1	.889	321	247
Toronto	4	5	.444	265	291
Hamilton	4	6	.400	237	280
Ottawa	0	9	.000	207	322

WEST DIVISION

	W	L	Pct	PF	PA
Edmonton	7	3	.700	259	248
Saskatchewan	6	3	.666	274	215
Winnipeg	5	4	.555	204	243
BC	4	5	.444	214	225
Calgary	4	6	.400	352	297

Thursday's Game
Ottawa vs. Montreal, 7:30 p.m.

Friday's Game
Winnipeg vs. Edmonton, 9:30 p.m.

Saturday's Game
Hamilton vs. Toronto, 7 p.m.

Sunday's Game
Saskatchewan vs. BC, 7 p.m.

NFL

Preseason Week 2
Thursday's Games
Las Vegas at Houston, 8 p.m.
San Francisco at L.A. Chargers, 10 p.m.

Friday's Games
N.Y. Jets at Pittsburgh, 7 p.m.
Carolina at Jacksonville, 7:30 p.m.
Green Bay at Denver, 9 p.m.

Saturday's Games
Washington at Detroit, noon
Buffalo at Cleveland, 1 p.m.
Baltimore at Minnesota, 1 p.m.
Atlanta at Indianapolis, 1 p.m.
N.Y. Giants at Miami, 4 p.m.
New Orleans at L.A. Rams, 4 p.m.
Philadelphia at New England, 7 p.m.
Chicago at Cincinnati, 7 p.m.
Kansas City at Tampa Bay, 7:30 p.m.
Dallas at Arizona, 10 p.m.

Sunday's Game
Seattle at Tennessee, 8 p.m.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

American Football Coaches Association FCS Coaches Poll

Rk	School (1st votes)	2025 record	Pts.	2025 final
1	Montana St. (25)	14-2	649	1
2	Montana	13-2	605	3
3	South Dakota St. (1)	9-5	591	14
4	Illinois St.	12-5	553	2
5	Tarleton St.	12-2	527	6
6	UC Davis	9-4	498	8
7	Villanova	12-3	448	4
8	Rhode Island	11-3	434	10
9	Youngstown St.	8-5	428	17
10	North Dakota	8-6	396	16
11	Lehigh	12-1	359	9
12	South Dakota	10-5	347	11
13	Stephen F. Austin	11-3	313	7
14	ACU	9-5	295	12
15	Tennessee Tech	11-2	294	15
16	Southern Illinois	7-5	231	NR
17	Mercer	9-3	189	18
18	Austin Peay	7-5	186	NR
19	Yale	9-3	164	13
20	Southeastern Louisiana	9-4	160	19
21	Lamar	8-5	133	21
22	UT Martin	6-6	123	NR
23	Monmouth (NJ)	9-3	105	20
24	Northern Arizona	7-5	67	NR
25	South Carolina St.	10-3	63	25

Others receiving votes: Richmond, 31; Southeast Missouri St., 27; Valparaiso, 23; Alabama St., 21; East Tennessee St., 21; Western Carolina, 20; Idaho St., 15; Harvard, 14; Central Connecticut St., 12; Furman, 12; Jackson St., 11; Chattanooga, 9; Eastern Kentucky, 9; UIW, 9; UT-Rio Grande Valley, 9; Dartmouth, 8; Elon, 7; William & Mary, 7; Holy Cross, 6; Wofford, 5; Prairie View A&M, 4; Northern Colorado, 3; St. Thomas (MN), 3; New Hampshire, 2; Central Arkansas, 1; McNeese St., 1; San Diego, 1; Stony Brook, 1.

AUTO RACING

NASCAR Cup Series
Cook Out 400
Richmond Raceway
1. (10) Joey Logano, Team Penske, 400, 73 pts.
2. (2) Chase Briscoe, Joe Gibbs, 400, 52.
3. (23) Austin Cindric, Team Penske, 400, 48.
4. (14) Denny Hamlin, Joe Gibbs, 400, 46.
5. (13) Chase Elliott, Hendrick MS, 400, 38.
6. (30) Kyle Larson, Hendrick MS, 400, 31.
7. (8) Christopher Bell, Joe Gibbs, 400, 36.
8. (3) Josh Berry, Wood Brothers, 400, 40.
9. (5) William Byron, Hendrick MS, 400, 30.
10. (25) Alex Bowman, Hendrick MS, 400, 27.
11. (32) Tyler Reddick, 23XI Racing, 400, 28.
12. (18) Ross Chastain, Trackhouse, 399, 25.
13. (1) Ryan Blaney, Team Penske, 399, 41.
14. (31) S. Van Gisbergen, Trackhouse, 399, 23.
15. (4) Ty Gibbs, Joe Gibbs Racing, 399, 22.
16. (20) Daniel Suárez, Spire MS, 399, 21.
17. (6) Ryan Preece, RFK Racing, 398, 20.
18. (35) Noah Gragson, Front Row MS, 398, 19.
19. (16) Austin Dillon, R. Childress, 398, 18.
20. (7) Bubba Wallace, 23XI Racing, 398, 22.
21. (19) Chris Buescher, RFK Racing, 398, 16.
22. (12) J. H. Nemechek, Legacy MC, 398, 15.
23. (33) Austin Hill, Richard Childress, 397, 0.
24. (17) Riley Herbst, 23XI Racing, 397, 13.
25. (11) Connor Zilisch, Trackhouse, 397, 12.
26. (9) Brad Keselowski, RFK Racing, 397, 11.
27. (21) Erik Jones, Legacy Motor Club, 396, 10.
28. (26) Michael McDowell, Spire MS 396, 9.
29. (29) Cole Custer, Haas Factory, 396, 8.
30. (27) Todd Gilliland, Front Row MS, 396, 7.
31. (28) Ricky Stenhouse Jr, HYAK MS, 396, 6.
32. (34) Ty Dillon, Kaulig Racing, 394, 5.
33. (15) AJ Allmendinger, Kaulig, 394, 4.
34. (37) Cody Ware, Rick Ware Racing, 392, 3.
35. (36) Josh Bilicki, Garage 66, 391, 0.
36. (24) Zane Smith, Front Row MS, 366, 1.
37. (22) C. Hocevar, Spire MS, 279, Engine 1.

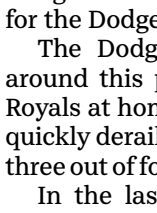
Cup Series Point Leaders
1. Denny Hamlin 969
2. Ryan Blaney 854
3. Ty Gibbs 842
4. Tyler Reddick 831
5. Chase Briscoe 715
6. Chase Elliott 695
7. Christopher Bell 695
8. Kyle Larson 660
9. Joey Logano 659
10. Chris Buescher 653
11. Carson Hocevar 645
12. William Byron 630
13. Daniel Suárez 618
14. Bubba Wallace 587
15. Austin Cindric 574
16. Shane Van Gisbergen 567
17. Ryan Preece 517
18. Ross Chastain 504
19. Brad Keselowski 489
20. Erik Jones 486

Roberts calls out Dodgers amid recent struggles

James H. Williams
USA TODAY

The Los Angeles Dodgers remain one of the favorites to win the World Series, but that doesn't mean it will come easy.

Manager Dave Roberts called out his team both offensively and defensively on Aug. 16 after the Dodgers lost three of four games to the Milwaukee Brewers in the series at Dodger Stadium.


Roberts

"I say this because it's just been four or five, six weeks of below-average production in our offense," he said. "It's just the truth, and I think we just haven't played clean baseball for quite some time, and that speaks to the defense."

When asked which was more concerning, Roberts pointed at both.

"I think both," Roberts said. "Giving extra outs, which causes pitches and the guys are working with the defense and their at-bats, but I still think there's certain intent offensively, but they both need to get better."

The Dodgers have lost 10 of their last 15 games – including a seven-game losing streak from July 31 to Aug. 7 – and have gone 13-14 since the All-Star break.

Roberts admitted he didn't have a single answer as to what will break the team out of this funk but continued to cite the team's experience as a reason for this to be seen as nothing more than a phase and not a snapshot of what this team is going forward.

During that seven-game losing streak, the Dodgers were swept by the Boston Red Sox and the Chicago Cubs.

"That's just not winning baseball," Roberts said. "Our pedigree and what we typically do is control the zone, grind it out at-bats and create stress. We just aren't doing that."

Los Angeles even acquired Tarik Skubal during that losing streak, and he hasn't been able to turn things around for the team. He is 0-1 after three starts for the Dodgers.

The Dodgers appeared to have turned things around this past week, sweeping the Kansas City Royals at home in a three-game series, but that was quickly derailed. The Brewers came to town and won three out of four games, outscoring the Dodgers 16-10.

In the last two games against Milwaukee, the Dodgers offense was held to three runs on 11 hits and three walks.

"I like to think they are all aware of it," Roberts told reporters on Sunday. "They've done it in the past. We just need to reset offensively, and it just can't happen all at once. We just have to start building collectively."

WEATHER

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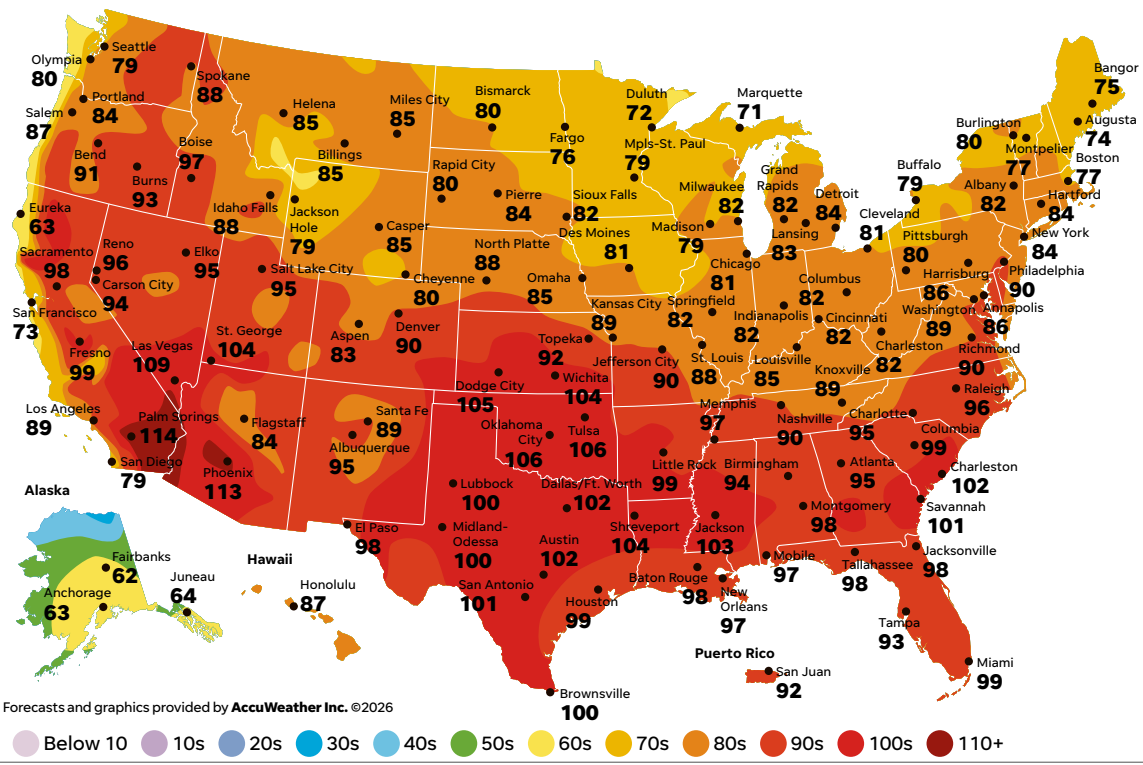
TODAY'S FORECAST

The **Northeast** will become less humid and sunnier today as high pressure builds into the region. Sizzling heat and high humidity will continue in the **Southeast** and the southern **Plains**. Spotty afternoon thunderstorms will spread from the **Gulf Coast** to **North Carolina**.

Thunderstorms are expected to develop across the **Midwest**. From eastern **Nebraska** to central **Illinois**, storms will be capable of producing flooding downpours, hail and localized damaging wind gusts of 65-75 mph. Farther west, spotty late-day thundershowers will stretch from **Montana** and eastern **Idaho** to northeastern **Arizona** and western **New Mexico**.

Along the **West Coast**, temperatures will trend higher across the interior region. A partly sunny sky is expected.

TODAY'S HIGH TEMPERATURES



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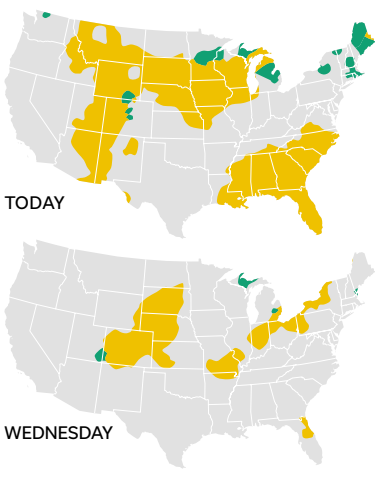


EXTREMES

Note: For contiguous 48 states through Sunday

HOTTEST: 113° Death Valley, Calif.

COLDEST: 35° Angel Fire, N.M.

TOP TRAVEL CITIES Air quality index (AQI)

ATLANTA	BALTIMORE	BOSTON	CHARLOTTE	CHICAGO	DALLAS/FT. WORTH	DENVER	DETROIT	HONOLULU	HOUSTON	LAS VEGAS	LOS ANGELES
TUE Sunny, warm 95/71	TUE Mostly sunny 87/66	TUE A P.M. shower 77/67	TUE Mostly sunny 95/74	TUE Stray t-storm 81/66	TUE Sunny, hot 102/83	TUE Partly sunny 90/61	TUE Partly sunny 84/67	TUE A P.M. shower 87/75	TUE Very warm 99/80	TUE Partly sunny 109/86	TUE Partly sunny 89/69
WED Hot 97/76	WED Mostly sunny 89/70	WED Warmer 84/70	WED Mostly sunny 93/73	WED Stray t-storm 78/62	WED Hot 103/82	WED Heavy t-storm 87/63	WED T-storm 80/60	WED Partly sunny 88/77	WED Very warm 98/78	WED Hot 109/87	WED Partly sunny 91/69
THU Very hot 98/76	THU T-storms 87/68	THU Shower 82/65	THU Heavy t-storm 97/74	THU Mostly sunny 81/65	THU Hot 106/83	THU Mostly sunny 92/65	THU Mostly sunny 79/59	THU Partly sunny 88/75	THU Very warm 99/80	THU Hot 109/87	THU Sunny, warm 91/69
AQI Good	AQI Moderate	AQI Good	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Unhealthy s/g	AQI Moderate	AQI Good	AQI Good	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate

MIAMI	MPLS-ST. PAUL	NEW ORLEANS	NEW YORK	ORLANDO	PHILADELPHIA	PHOENIX	SALT LAKE CITY	SAN DIEGO	SAN FRANCISCO	SEATTLE	WASHINGTON
TUE Hot 99/80	TUE Stray t-storm 79/61	TUE A P.M. t-storm 97/80	TUE Mostly sunny 84/71	TUE Stray t-storm 97/78	TUE Mostly sunny 90/71	TUE Hot 113/91	TUE Partly sunny 95/71	TUE Partly sunny 79/69	TUE Partly sunny 73/57	TUE Turning sunny 79/56	TUE Mostly sunny 89/72
WED Stray t-storm 96/80	WED Partly sunny 81/63	WED Stray t-storm 96/77	WED Mostly sunny 87/72	WED Stray t-storm 93/77	WED Clouds, sun 91/73	WED Hot 111/89	WED Mostly sunny 98/74	WED Humid 78/69	WED Breezy 72/58	WED Some sun, nice 77/57	WED Mostly sunny 91/74
THU Stray t-storm 95/81	THU Stray t-storm 84/67	THU Stray t-storm 95/79	THU Showers 82/67	THU Stray t-storm 95/78	THU Showers 85/70	THU Stray t-storm 111/90	THU Hot 101/75	THU Humid 80/70	THU Breezy 68/58	THU Mostly sunny 82/59	THU T-storms 87/71
AQI Moderate	AQI Good	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Moderate	AQI Good	AQI Moderate	AQI Good	AQI Moderate

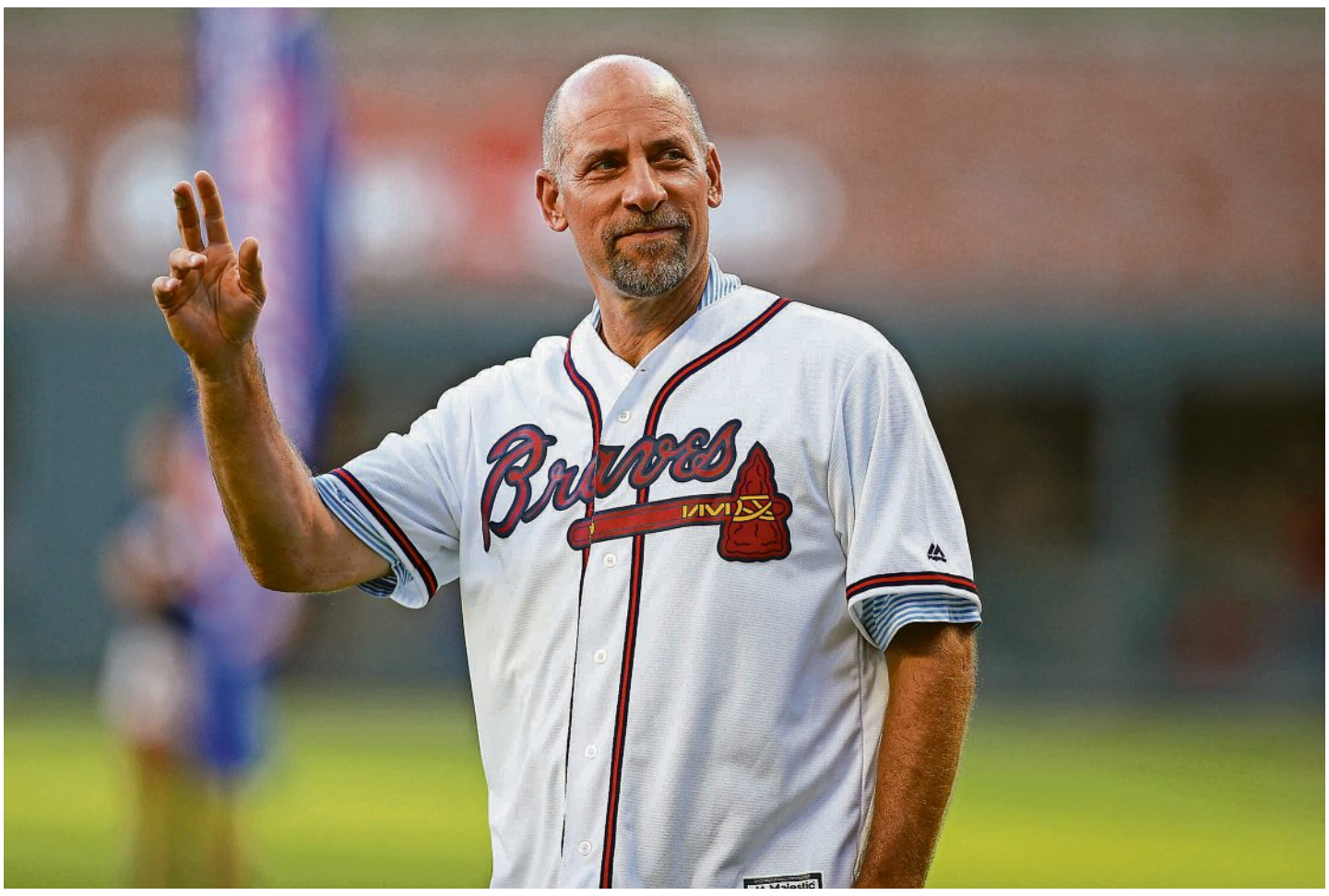
c Cloudy · f Fog · i Ice · r Rain · sf Snowflurries · sn Snow · w Windy · dr Drizzle · h Haze · pc Partly cloudy · s Sunny · sh Showers · t Thunderstorms

U.S. CITIES

	TODAY	WED
Akron, Ohio	79/63s	75/62t
Albany, N.Y.	82/60s	83/64pc
Albuquerque	95/70s	97/70s
Allentown, Pa.	86/61s	86/66pc
Amarillo, Texas	101/72s	102/67t
Anaheim, Calif.	89/67s	92/67pc
Anchorage, Alaska	63/54c	62/53sh
Aspen, Colo.	83/50pc	80/51t
Atlantic City, N.J.	82/71s	87/72s
Augusta, Ga.	99/72pc	99/72pc
Austin, Texas	102/77s	102/77s
Bakersfield, Calif.	101/76pc	104/76pc
Baton Rouge, La.	98/78t	97/78t
Billings, Mont.	85/60t	91/59pc
Birmingham, Ala.	94/71s	97/74pc
Bismarck, N.D.	80/53pc	83/59t
Boise, Idaho	97/65s	98/67s
Buffalo, N.Y.	79/64s	74/58t
Burlington, Vt.	80/60pc	79/60t
Cedar Rapids, Iowa	76/63t	78/60pc
Charleston, S.C.	102/78t	98/79t
Charleston, W.Va.	82/62pc	86/68c
Cheyenne, Wyo.	80/56t	83/54t
Cincinnati	82/65pc	80/67t
Cleveland	81/66s	79/63t
Colorado Springs	93/60c	80/57t
Columbia, S.C.	99/77s	98/74s
Columbus, Ohio	82/64s	79/67t
Corpus Christi, Texas	99/76s	99/77s
Dayton, Ohio	80/67s	80/64t
Daytona Beach, Fla.	96/76t	93/74t
Des Moines, Iowa	81/65t	80/63t
Duluth, Minn.	72/49pc	75/51pc
Durham, N.C.	96/72t	93/71s
El Paso, Texas	98/75s	102/76s
Fairbanks, Alaska	62/51c	66/51c
Flagstaff, Ariz.	84/54pc	82/55pc
Fargo, N.D.	76/50pc	81/60pc
Fort Myers, Fla.	96/80s	94/79t
Fort Smith, Ark.	105/80s	108/78s
Fort Wayne, Ind.	80/66pc	80/59t
Fresno, Calif.	99/72s	104/73s
Grand Rapids, Mich.	82/63pc	78/55t
Green Bay, Wis.	77/55t	80/54pc
Greensboro, N.C.	92/71t	91/72s
Greenville, S.C.	94/72s	93/72s
Harrisburg, Pa.	86/64s	89/69pc
Hartford, Conn.	84/60pc	87/64pc
Indianapolis	82/67s	80/66t
Islip, N.Y.	84/68s	87/72s
Jackson, Miss.	103/77t	102/77t
Jacksonville, Fla.	98/77t	99/75t
Jefferson City, Mo.	90/71s	85/70t
Kansas City	89/68pc	81/68t
Key West, Fla.	92/82pc	93/83s
Knoxville, Tenn.	89/68pc	90/70pc
Laredo, Texas	105/78s	105/78s
Lexington, Ky.	84/63c	85/69t
Lincoln, Neb.	83/67t	81/63t
Little Rock, Ark.	99/79pc	104/78t
Long Beach, Calif.	86/68pc	88/69pc
Louisville, Ky.	85/68s	86/70t
Lubbock, Texas	100/74s	103/74s
Madison, Wis.	79/60t	77/54pc
Manchester, N.H.	81/62pc	87/65pc
Memphis, Tenn.	97/78pc	101/76t
Milwaukee	82/64t	76/60pc
Mobile, Ala.	97/76t	96/75t
Modesto, Calif.	97/65pc	99/65s
Montgomery, Ala.	98/74t	99/73t
Myrtle Beach, S.C.	96/78t	92/79t
Nags Head, N.C.	88/76t	85/76t
Nashville, Tenn.	90/68pc	96/74pc
Newark, N.J.	87/71pc	91/73s
New Haven, Conn.	83/66s	85/69s
Norfolk, Va.	89/77t	88/76pc
Oakland, Calif.	71/57pc	72/59pc
Oklahoma City	106/77s	105/75s
Omaha, Neb.	85/66t	83/65t
Palm Springs, Calif.	114/87pc	112/88pc
Pensacola, Fla.	96/78t	94/77t
Pierre, S.D.	84/60c	81/60t
Pittsburgh	80/62s	79/65t
Portland, Maine	75/62sh	79/62pc
Portland, Ore.	84/58pc	81/59pc
Providence, R.I.	82/66pc	86/67pc
Raleigh, N.C.	96/75t	96/75s
Rapid City, S.D.	80/58t	85/59t
Reno, Nev.	96/63s	98/62s
Richmond, Va.	90/72pc	90/72pc
Rochester, N.Y.	78/61pc	77/55t
Sacramento, Calif.	98/60pc	99/61pc
San Antonio	101/78s	102/77s
San Jose, Calif.	82/60pc	85/61s
Santa Fe, N.M.	89/59c	92/60c
Sarasota, Fla.	93/82t	91/79t
Savannah, Ga.	101/76t	99/76t
Scottsdale, Ariz.	111/88s	110/86pc
Shreveport, La.	104/81s	104/79t
Sioux Falls, S.D.	82/60t	77/61t
South Bend, Ind.	81/66pc	79/55t
Spokane, Wash.	88/60pc	87/58s
Springfield, Mo.	98/73s	97/71t
Springfield, Ill.	82/67s	81/64t
St. Louis	88/72s	84/71t
St. Petersburg, Fla.	93/80t	92/80t
Syracuse, N.Y.	80/61pc	77/61t
Tallahassee, Fla.	98/78t	96/73t
Tampa, Fla.	93/82t	92/80t
Toledo, Ohio	82/66s	80/59t
Topeka, Kan.	92/69t	85/67t
Tucson, Ariz.	105/82c	105/80pc
Tupelo, Miss.	95/72pc	99/75t
Tulsa, Okla.	106/84s	107/75s
Virginia Beach, Va.	87/76pc	86/76pc

Tommy John surgery extended many careers

Gabe Lacques
USA TODAY



John Smoltz pitched nine of his 21 seasons in the majors after having Tommy John surgery in 2000. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2015. BRETT DAVIS/IMAGN IMAGES

Tommy John, shown in this photo from June 6, 2019, came back to pitch 14 MLB seasons after his UCL surgery in 1974. JAY CALDERON/THE (PALM SPRINGS) DESERT SUN

It's not often a player can be credited with saving the careers of thousands of players who followed him or ensured that a select few of those would go on to earn hundreds of millions of dollars thanks to his courage.

Yet Tommy John, in conjunction with orthopedist Frank Jobe, did just that for generations of pitchers.

John died Aug. 15 at the age of 83, his 288-win career almost a footnote in the grand scope of his life. He served as patient No. 1 for the surgery that would eventually bear his name is among the most significant off-field impacts a player can make.

When he agreed to let Jobe replace the ulnar collateral ligament in his left elbow in 1974, it was a journey into the unknown at the intersection of sports and medicine. Nowadays, the surgical scar and the established protocols for recovery, regaining strength and eventually returning to the mound are well-established and even more evolved.

Yet all that was foreign to Jobe and John. And you could fill up a wing of the Hall of Fame with those who have benefited.

Here are 12 legendary pitchers whose careers were saved or extended by Tommy John surgery:

John Smoltz

Career record: 213-55, 154 saves
WAR: 69.0
Notable: In his first iteration, Smoltz was the warning shot fired that the dynastic Braves of the 1990s were coming. He became a World Series champion by 1995 and in '96 authored one of the most dominant seasons of that decade, winning 24 games and striking out a major league-high 276. Yet he blew out his elbow before the 2000 season, leaving his career at a crossroads. "There weren't many 34-year-olds, in my mind, having Tommy John surgery," Smoltz told The Athletic in 2018. "I was going to be in the final year of my contract and I just figured that no one would want a 34-year-old who had Tommy John surgery. I just didn't think it was going to be worth it. I was pretty down and out and ready to call it quits." That is, until Tommy John himself called. John noted that he was the same age – 34 – when he went under Jobe's knife. So Smoltz went for it – and what a second act. He toggled to the bullpen and saved a major league-high 55 games in 2002, followed by 45- and 43-save seasons for Atlanta. Returning to the rotation in 2005, he logged 229 innings and while he only struck out 169, his 3.06 ERA was still 39% better than average. He would pitch through 2009 and earn election to the Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility – the first Tommy John recipient to be inducted.

Justin Verlander

Career record: 266-159
WAR: 82.3
Notable: It's true: The majority of Verlander's achievements – 226 wins, 3,013 strikeouts, two Cy Young Awards and 72.3 WAR – were achieved before Verlander's elbow went out after one start in 2020. But his return to dominance after Tommy John showed that yes, a generational pitcher could return to such heights even after the procedure – and even at the age of 39. That's how old Verlander was in 2022, when he won a third Cy Young, led the majors with a 1.75 ERA and bagged his second World Series title, earning his first Fall Classic win that autumn. Verlander, who announced he is retiring after this season, indeed had a freakish arm, one that seemed bulletproof as he logged at least 30 starts in all but one season from 2006 to 2019. When the tiniest and most important ligament for a pitcher finally failed, he could still be put back together.

Shohei Ohtani

Career record: 47-22
WAR (pitching only): 19.2
Notable: It's possible the game's most talented player ever might have been a four-time MVP had his pitching career ended in 2018, when he first blew out his elbow. Fortunately, we'll never have to know. Ohtani did not pitch in 2019 and made just two appearances in the shortened 2020 season, but then unleashed the full fury of his two-way powers. From 2021 to 2023, he posted a 2.84 ERA and struck out 11.4 batters per nine innings over 74 starts, his '23 season likely the zenith of his multi-positional brilliance. Alas, that pitching season ended after a second UCL injury and another repair commenced after the season. That only makes his third pitching act even more remarkable: Ohtani's comeback from Surgery II even more precise, with a 2.17 ERA and 0.98 WHIP over 28 starts the last two seasons. That doesn't include his Greatest Game Ever in the 2025 National League championship series. While other maladies are impacting his pitching, Tommy John surgery allowed the world to enjoy every bit of Ohtani's talents.

Chris Sale

Career record: 157-96
WAR: 61.4
Notable: Sale was already a World Series champion and two-time American League strikeout champ by the time his ligament failed him just before the 2020 COVID-19 shutdown. Yet think of what he's done since: A 2024 NL Cy Young Award in which he was the league's pitching triple crown winner and three consecutive All-Star berths for the perennially contending Braves. Sale likes his new ligament and team so much, he signed on for $27 million in 2027 plus an option for '28, when he'll be 39 years old.

Zack Wheeler

Career record: 123-79
WAR: 44.2
Notable: Probably the best modern example of a storied career almost totally attributable to Tommy John surgery. Wheeler had just one full big-league year under his belt when he had the procedure in May 2015, and the Mets reaped the benefits of Peak Wheeler just one season. But what a decade it's been since his return: three All-Star appearances, 1,686 strikeouts, a 105-63 record and, since 2022, annual trips to the playoffs with the Philadelphia Phillies. Now 36, Wheeler may possibly retire after 2027, having grossed nearly $255 million in salary – almost all of it after TJ.

Nathan Eovaldi

Career record: 112-93
WAR: 25.9
Notable: One of the most significant pitchers on this list, as he represents so many modern pitfalls of the game: Tommy John surgery at 17, an ethos from the very beginning to throw the ball as hard as possible at all times, and then another Tommy John procedure as a pro, in 2017. Yet you'll find few pitchers who have grinded through to accomplish so much. Eovaldi is now a two-time World Series champion and what he contributed to runs by the Red Sox and Texas Rangers in 2018 and 2023, respectively, cannot be overestimated. Signed for $24 million next season, Eovaldi may gross close to $200 million for his career.

Jacob deGrom

Career record: 104-73
WAR: 49.8
Notable: You wonder how often Eovaldi and deGrom, who now share a clubhouse with the Rangers, look at each other and think, "Been there, done that." DeGrom is also a two-time TJ survivor, though his first one came as a professional, with the Mets in 2010. That worked out OK: By 2014, deGrom was NL Rookie of the Year and by 2018 won the first of two consecutive Cy Young Awards. Just a staggering run from 2017 to 2019, when he struck out 239, 265 and 255 batters in consecutive seasons, posted a 2.53 ERA and had a 5.12 strikeout-walk ratio. The Rangers guaranteed him $180 million in 2023, but his elbow failed him, and a second UCL procedure was needed after just six starts. In 2026, he is back to striking out 11 batters per inning (even if he only goes five a start these days) and perhaps might sync up with Eovaldi for a daunting playoff duo.

Max Fried

Career record: 96-45
WAR: 31.3
Notable: Yet another kid whose career might have never taken flight had the surgery not been both pioneered but also perfected. Fried went under the knife as a San Diego Padres prospect in August 2014, and then shipped to the Atlanta Braves in a six-player blockbuster involving Justin Upton. You might say the Braves were wise to buy low: Fried produced two All-Star seasons and a Cy Young runner-up campaign in Atlanta and won them the 2021 World Series before signing a $218 million contract with the Yankees in December 2024.

Stephen Strasburg

Career record: 113-62
WAR: 32.3
Notable: Perhaps the most polarizing player of his era, Strasburg was drafted first overall when the modern internet was bursting with information, some of it dubious. Almost immediately, Strasburg came under fire for his "inverted W" pitching mechanics. When he did succumb to Tommy John surgery toward the end of his 2010 rookie season, his full-season comeback in 2012 turned into a never-ending take-fest on Shutdown Protocol and best practices in TJ recovery. The Nationals did shut him down and did make the playoffs, though they were bounced in the first round without him. Thus began a star-crossed career filled with injuries and ultimately ended by them when thoracic outlet syndrome became too high a hill to climb. Yet wedged in the middle: Stephen Strasburg, 2019 World Series MVP, after an epic playoff run that earned him a $245 million contract.

Adam Wainwright

Career record: 200-128
WAR: 45.3
Notable: When Wainwright's elbow barked during spring training in 2011, the worst fears were realized: He'd need Tommy John surgery, and the St. Louis Cardinals' season looked as cooked as his UCL. But you can't predict ball: The Cardinals would stage an absurd late-season rally and go on to win the World Series without Wainwright. Not that he was done: Waino returned in 2012, earned NL Cy Young runner-up honors in 2013 behind 19 wins and a major league-high 241⅔ innings pitched and 12 of his 18 big-league seasons after TJ. He would win his 200th career game at age 41.

Yu Darvish

Career record: 115-93
WAR: 33.2
Notable: A career in so many chapters, Darvish was well-accomplished in Japan before debuting with the Rangers in 2012 and earning AL Cy Young runner-up honors in 2013. He was 3-for-3 on All-Star appearances before his elbow gave out in March 2015. While he never quite reached that dominance of his early Texas days, Darvish started 214 more games after his surgery, for the Rangers, Dodgers, Cubs and Padres, and racked up two more top-10 Cy Young finishes in the 2020s.

Tarik Skubal

Career record: 61-43
WAR: 21.2
Notable: Oh yeah, this guy! Good health and labor conditions willing, Skubal is expected to sign a contract in excess of at least $300 million this winter, and probably much more. You wonder what the Seattle University lefthander sitting on the operating table would think of that outcome. But Skubal recovered and grabbed enough of the Detroit Tigers' attention to get picked in the ninth round. The rest is all of his doing. But the bankroll can certainly give a hat tip to John and Jobe.

MLB POWER RANKINGS

Historic debut helps Cards climb in NL

Gabe Lacques
USA TODAY

Don't like your team very much this season? Just wait a week.

So it goes in the slog known as the 2026 Major League Baseball season, where nobody's really out of it and anyone can get back in it just by winning a few games.

This week's example? The St. Louis Cardinals.

They dealt away starter Dustin May and reliever JoJo Romero and respected outfielder Lars Nootbaar at the trade deadline and promptly won four consecutive series and eight of their last 12 games. That's lifted them above .500 and within three games of a playoff spot.

Talk about addition by, well, addition: Nootbaar's trade helped open some space for rookie Joshua Báez, who merely had the greatest debut in major league history. Phenom? He is now, it seems.

As such, the Cardinals have leaped three spots in USA TODAY Sports' power rankings, with more upward mobility in the offing. They have eight games this week, including a five-gamer against the Cincinnati Reds, against whom they've won five of eight. They head to Philadelphia next weekend, by which time they could possibly climb into playoff position with a good series against the Phillies.

Or not. Twenty-four of 30 teams are living week-to-week, and there's no telling how the road ahead may treat the Cardinals. For now, it's good living.

Joshua Báez is correct: The Cardinals climbed three spots in USA TODAY Sports' MLB power rankings. KAMIL KRZACZYNSKI/IMAGN IMAGES

A look at our updated MLB power rankings:

1. Milwaukee Brewers (–): Before we freak out too much, keep in mind the Brewers went 6-0 against the Dodgers last year.

2. Los Angeles Dodgers (–): It's gone from "annual summer malaise" to "wow perhaps this just isn't a very good team" very quickly.

3. Atlanta Braves (+1): With 36 homers, Matt Olson has outside shot at second 50-homer season.

4. Tampa Bay Rays (-1): Shane McClanahan off the injured list to start wraparound finale against Baltimore.

5. Chicago Cubs (–): Edward Cabrera hit hard in first start off IL as handy Javier Assad sent to minors.

6. New York Yankees (–): Cody Bellinger set to start rehab assignment on Aug. 20.

7. Chicago White Sox (+2): Just an absolute statement in sweeping the Tigers as Munetaka Murakami, Miguel Vargas reach 28 homers.

8. Philadelphia Phillies (+2): Have not lost since creeping out of the corn.

9. San Diego Padres (+2): Look out: 19-10 since the break.

10. Boston Red Sox (-3): With Toronto, Baltimore coming on, will they slide all the way out of playoff position?

11. Arizona Diamondbacks (-3): Well-traveled Dennis Santana added to bullpen mix.

12. Miami Marlins (–): Jakob Marsee is Mr. August, with a 1.018 career OPS.

13. St. Louis Cardinals (+3): If they can survive an 11-game road trip, anything's possible.

14. Houston Astros (-1): Josh Hader is 17-for-17 in save chances since return from injury.

15. Texas Rangers (–): Have lost 17 of 23 AL West road games. Tough way to win a division.

16. Baltimore Orioles (+4): Gunnar Henderson slides to fifth in the batting order, and club takes three in a row at Tampa Bay.

17. Cleveland Guardians (-3): That's five straight series losses, and now Chase DeLauter is hurt again.

18. Pittsburgh Pirates (–): After a planned respite, Paul Skenes' start on Aug. 19 will be highly scrutinized.

19. Detroit Tigers (+2): Have lost six of nine to White Sox this season. So, wild card it is?

20. Toronto Blue Jays (+4): Heart of a champion? Now, just one game out of playoff position.

21. Cincinnati Reds (+1): Eight-game week vs. St. Louis, Arizona could ignite or thoroughly douse any thoughts of contending.

22. Minnesota Twins (-6): Outscored 23-7 in sweep by Phillies.

23. Washington Nationals (-4): Now just 3 ½ games up on sad-sack Mets.

24. Seattle Mariners (-1): A particularly brutal 15-game stretch arrives: Brewers, Cubs, Phillies, Blue Jays, Red Sox.

25. New York Mets (–): Now .500 (22-22) in the Andy Green era.

26. San Francisco Giants (–): Buster Posey says manager Tony Vitello will be back in 2027.

27. Kansas City Royals (–): Noah Cameron's one-hit shutout of Angels is club's first since Zack Greinke in 2009.

28. Colorado Rockies (+1): Adael Amador's first hit this season is a home run.

29. Athletics (-1): It took him 26 games, but Tommy Tanks gets his first big-league homer in Yolo County.

30. Los Angeles Angels (–): Ben Joyce, back from May 2025 labrum surgery, picks up first save in nearly two years.

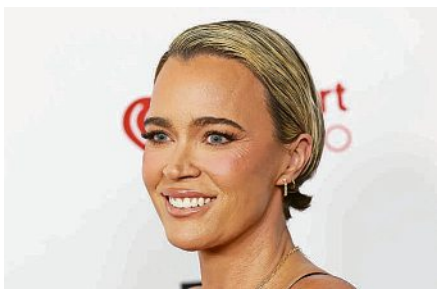
Carly Simon's new 'Comes in Waves' is a family affair

Her first album of original material in 18 years features children Ben and Sally Taylor. **Page 2D**

Disney returns to 'Camp Rock' aiming for a third connection

A new generation of campers takes the microphone and taps into nostalgia. **Page 4D**

LIFELINE



FRAZER HARRISON/GETTY IMAGES

MAKING WAVES
TEDDI MELLENCAMP

Teddi Mellencamp's new boyfriend, previously known only as "Valley Guy," isn't such a mystery anymore. The "Real Housewives of Beverly Hills" alum, 45, revealed she's dating PJ Conley with an Instagram-official post sharing photos and videos of them at her father John Mellencamp's concert at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles. "First he met a cougar. Then he met The Cougs," Mellencamp captioned the post, revealing Conley as the man she has been referring to as "Valley Guy." Conley, who is more than a decade younger than Mellencamp, works as a financial benefits analyst and holds an MBA from the University of Southern California, according to his LinkedIn profile. Mellencamp's new relationship comes as she continues to share updates about her health following her Stage 4 cancer diagnosis, treatment and current scans that showed no detectable cancer.

IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY
WHO'S CELEBRATING TODAY

Cobain

Drummer **Dennis Elliott** (Foreigner), 76. Comedian **Elayne Boosler**, 74. Actor **Denis Leary**, 69. Journalist **Bob Woodruff**, 65. Drummer **Blas Elias** (Slaughter), 59. Actor **Edward Norton**, 57. Actor **Christian Slater**, 57. Actor **Kaitlin Olson**, 51. Comedian **Andy Samberg**, 48. Singer **Mika**, 43. Artist-model **Frances Bean Cobain**, 34. Actor **Maia Mitchell**, 33. *– USA TODAY Network*

HOROSCOPE | SANCTUARY
More: www.sanctuaryworld.co

Aries (March 21-April 19). Is there a desire to escape, glossing over deeper issues? Seeking pleasure could lead to an emotional spiral today.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). A close partnership may press on a story from your past. Is a small issue suddenly becoming huge?

Gemini (May 21-June 21). Turning one small task into a full production? Going overboard is likely.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). A playful impulse can create strain on your budget. The thrill is real, but so may be the receipt!

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Experiencing growing pains? An opportunity for expansion may coincide with some intense feelings. Work through what's coming up.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). A loaded conversation reveals what you've been avoiding. Itching to defend your position? Silence may be the smartest reply.

Libra (Sept.23-Oct. 23). Tempting to overspend for the group? Reconnect with your priorities.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Feelings are impossible to hide today! Whether positive or challenging, everyone will see it .

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You're full of big ideas today! But are they being accompanied by underlying fears? Move through the unknown.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). A social connection can stir up questions about trust and loyalty. Are they looking for more access to you?

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Your ambitions may overwhelm a close relationship today. Can the path to success factor in someone else's needs, too?

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). Bold plans collide with your actual bandwidth. Do you have the energy to take on what you're envisioning?

MOVIES

Matthew McConaughey stars as a beekeeper in "The Rivals of Amziah King," now in theaters. EMMA ROSE MILLIGAN FOR USA TODAY

McConaughey enjoys the sting of his 'Rivals' role

Patrick Ryan USA TODAY

NEW YORK –

There's a cruel irony to getting cast as a beekeeper, only to discover that you're severely allergic. • That happened to Matthew McConaughey as he was about to start filming "The Rivals of Amziah King" (in theaters), a music-driven thriller about a mischievous Oklahoman (McConaughey) who teaches his former foster daughter (Angelina LookingGlass) about the shockingly cutthroat honey business. • "The good news is, if you're going to find out you're allergic to bee stings, it's best for it to happen five days before production, which is when I got stung," says McConaughey, 56, on a recent visit to USA TODAY's studio.

As he was driving home that day, "I started noticing my peripheral vision is getting less and less, and I'm like, 'Well, something's in my eye!' " the Oscar winner recalls. "I pull down the little vanity mirror and the whole left side of my face was swollen shut. I was like, 'Oh, I guess I'm allergic!' "

While most actors might then demand using a stunt double or computer-generated imagery insects, McConaughey took the injury in stride.

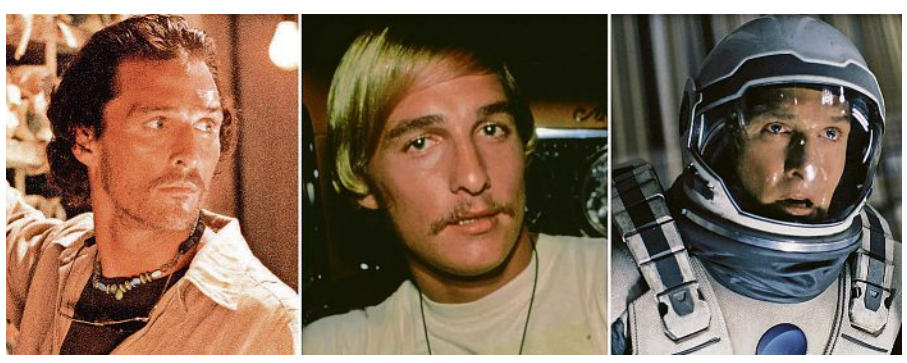
"The scene where I'm holding the queen bee, and tens of thousands of bees are swarming around me – we moved that to the last scene of [filming], in case I got bit," he says with a grin. "Then you don't need this face on film anymore!"

McConaughey chats with USA TODAY about Willie Nelson, his most underrated movies and what's in his fridge.

Question: If suddenly we discovered a bee's nest in the corner of this room, would you be running for the door along with the rest of us?

Answer: I wouldn't be running for the door. I've learned that they're actually like dogs that way: They love to chase if you run. Part of getting along with bees is remaining calm. You may get a rogue bee that's pissed off anyway; it's going to bite no matter what. But a large part of it is: Do not tense up. When I had all those bees hanging off my arm, that was about a 40-minute shot and my arm's getting very tired.

See MCCONAUGHEY, Page 2D



The many faces of McConaughey, in "Sahara," left, "Dazed and Confused" and "Interstellar." PHOTOS PROVIDED BY KEITH HAMSHERE/ PARAMOUNT PICTURES; UNIVERSAL HOME VIDEO; PARAMOUNT PICTURES/WARNER BROS. PICTURES

'Nashville' actress Panettiere dies at 36

Anika Reed
USA TODAY

Hayden Panettiere, the former child actress best known for her roles in TV series like "Heroes" and "Nashville," has died at 36.

Her representative confirmed her death to USA TODAY on Sunday, Aug. 16. TMZ was the first to share the news.

"It is with profound sadness that we share the tragic passing of our beloved Hayden. She was an incredible light and a force of nature who brought immeasurable love and joy to all who knew her – and to the millions who watched her onscreen," her father, Skip Panettiere, said in a statement.

He asked for privacy "as our family takes time to process this unimaginable loss."

Panettiere, whose long and prolific career in TV and film began when she was a baby, had been vocal in recent years about her troubles with addiction and the effects of childhood stardom.

Hayden Panettiere, at the world premiere of "Scream 4" in New York City in 2023, was open about her struggles with addiction and abuse. ANGELA WEISS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Panettiere's cause of death: How did she die?

A cause of death has not yet been shared.

On Aug. 16, at about 1:51 p.m., police officers and emergency medical personnel responded to a call from an acquaintance of Panettiere's reporting an unresponsive woman at an apartment complex in Greenville, South Carolina, police confirmed to USA TODAY on Aug. 17.

Upon arrival, medical assistance was administered, but the woman, later identified as Panettiere, was pronounced dead, according to police. They added that no foul play is suspected. The Greenville Police Department and the Greenville County Coroner's Office are investigating.

Panettiere's movies and shows include 'Scream' and 'Nashville'

A young blond star with plenty of on-screen spunk, Panettiere held her own against top stars in her early career, starring opposite Denzel Washington in "Remember the Titans" and Calista Flockhart in "Ally McBeal." Those early career moments also included roles in the soap opera "One Life to Live," the crime procedural "Law and Order: Special Victims Unit" and the animated film "A Bug's Life."

Her roles in Disney's "Tiger Cruise" (2004) as teen military child Maddie Dolan and as rival ice skater Gennifer "Gen" Harwood in 2005's "Ice Princess" brought her to the masses.

Panettiere's death comes more than a year after the loss of her "Ice Princess" costar Michelle Trachtenberg, who died at 39 in February 2025. New York City's Office of Chief Medical Examiner declared the cause and manner of Trachtenberg's death as complications of diabetes mellitus.

Panettiere's breakout starring role came as cheerleader Claire Bennet on NBC's teen superhero drama "Heroes" and later as a country-pop singer in more than 100 episodes of "Nashville."

See PANETTIERE, Page 2D

MUSIC NEWS & VIEWS

Fearless, introspective Simon rides the 'Waves'

Melissa Ruggieri USA TODAY

Anyone who thinks Carly Simon will tiptoe away from her career need only listen to the opening track of "Comes in Waves," her first album of original songs in 18 years.

Over a jaunty piano melody, Simon bulldozes into the chorus of "Howl" with the demand to "howl like the wind/roar like the river/wail like the rain/cry, shout and shiver."

The layered, string-based instrumentation couches the defiance of her words in the song's gripping bridge – "Where he swore, he'd never leave you/burn his promises and leave that liar" – her fortitude undiminished.

The famously private Simon, 83, recently disclosed she's been living with Parkinson's disease and underwent cancer surgery for basal cell carcinoma.

The dozen offerings on "Comes in Waves" (out now) were recorded primarily at her studio on Martha's Vineyard with close collaborators, including John Forté (who died earlier this year) and children Ben and Sally Taylor. The magnification of themes of grief, forgiveness, love, bitterness and cautious optimism represents a woman whose gifts for writing and vocal nuances are as pure as the days of "Anticipation," "Legend in Your Own Time," "You're So Vain" and the criminally underappreciated "Coming Around Again."

Carly Simon's "Comes in Waves" album, out now, includes musical contributions from her children Ben and Sally Taylor.
PROVIDED BY SALLY TAYLOR FOR CARLY SIMON

"Comes in Waves" is Simon's first album of original material in 18 years.
PROVIDED BY C'EST MUSIC

Simon's gift for poetic grace is undiminished at 83

While her famous ex, James Taylor (father of Sally and Ben), is the obvious target of "Maybe I Never Loved You," a brilliant seesaw of bile and indifference ("Maybe I never loved you/but anyway, I thought I did") and the similarly themed "The More I Look for You," it is Simon's delivery that matters most in her songs.

The slight hesitation in her last reading of "Maybe I never loved you/ maybe I always ... will" turns the song's intention inside out – or does it? That's the beauty of singers such as Simon, a diminishing breed who understands that phrasing and conveyance often lend the necessary ambiguity for listeners to find their own meaning.

Other songs, such as "Mother of Pearl," a gorgeous ode to daughter Sally, are more direct.

Apologies ("I can see you at seven a child of divorce/how can it be that we gave you no choice") and declarations of devotion ("You purr and you quarrel with the noisy parade ... And you stay") are stacked with personal details that shimmer with Simon's poetic grace. But it's hard to miss the clutch of emotion that catches in her throat as she unleashes the soulful torrent – "My girl, oh my girl" – as the song reaches its apex.

Elsewhere, this taut collection dips into mandolin and harmonica-brushed folk ("Love Has No Ending," its lyrics based on W.H. Auden's "As I Walked Out One Evening") and hymnal splendor ("Slowly," the song that bears the album's title phrase).

There also is a revisiting of "Share the End," which is as eerily culturally and politically relevant today as it was when first recorded in 1971 for Simon's "Anticipation" album. "Here come the madmen, they're too excited for atoning/"Burn the mosque, " they're shouting, "Burn it down!" she sings. Simon's visceral vocalizing at the end is both cathartic and heartbreaking.

Simon pays tribute to an old friend

Though introspection is Simon's default setting, the sly wit that has shaded so much of her stellar catalog since 1971 (looking at you again, "You're So Vain") also is apparent.

"Four in the Morning," written by her close friend, the late Judy Belushi (widow of comedian John Belushi), finally gets a recorded remembrance. Bells, keyboards and "weird little things" as noted in the album's liner notes, inject the song with whimsical flourishes, while Judy Belushi's vocals are nestled throughout.

Simon ends this striking, sticks-with-you album with "Do It Anyway," a buoyant flash of hopefulness and a simple call to action: "If you think you can't face the day/if you're sure you can't win the game/if you swear you can't find a way/ do it anyway."

Sounds of her family clapping and scatting over a strummed acoustic guitar ("the usual Thanksgiving fun" as described in the album notes) edge in as the song fades, a swirl of unprompted joy and laughter the lingering memory.

McConaughey

Continued from Page 1D

And the last thing I want to do is clench up because then I'm going to get stung and I'll have to try and grin through that.

So we'd be safe with you around?

I don't know if you'd be safe! [Laughs.] But I'd remain calm if I were you.

There's an incredible sequence where Amziah breaks down all the staples of a great potluck dinner. What are the must-haves at the McConaughey table?

I'm a little more informal, but my wife, Camila, is very good at putting together a meal that is fully proper and has many courses. What we can do that nobody's going to get anywhere else is *estrogonofe* [stroganoff], which is a Brazilian dish, or *brigadeiro* [a chocolate truffle-like sweet] for dessert. I'm pretty good on the grill: 1½-inch thick ribeyes with my secret rub. Or if it's less formal, my tuna fish salad.

Amziah says there's truth and lies in everything. What's the story of your tuna salad?

The tuna salad is the truth because it comes from a ritual on Sunday. In Brazil, they call it *mexidão*, which is you clean out the fridge of everything before it goes bad, and you use the last of any kind of leftovers to make a dish. My tuna fish salad is reminiscent of that: I can open up the fridge and I have a pretty good eye for what might go together. It's a different story every single time. Some people don't care for the green peas, but those are optional.

You also learned mandolin for this movie. Would you ever get noise complaints, or is that just when you play the bongos?

That's bongos, with a particular neighbor who no longer lives there. I think they got booted from the neighborhood. [Laughs.] No, where I happened to be when we were playing loud, either no one could hear it, or they liked what they heard.

You're quite an accomplished musician, and you're also good friends with Willie Nelson. What's one of your favorite memories of hanging out with Willie?

The first time I was on his bus – and you know what happens on his bus – I was hosting. So I've got my steaks all marinated; I'm going to be cooking the ribeyes that day on the grill. I get on his bus and partake of what you partake of when you're on Willie's bus. All of a sudden, it hits me: "Oh, (expletive)! The steaks are burning!" I jet off the bus, I run over to the grill ... I hadn't even lit it yet. The subplot becomes unmanageable! Yeah, that's a good Willie story.

You've made all kinds of movies, big and small, many of which are widely beloved. But what's something that deserves a second look? Maybe it didn't get a fair shake from critics or audiences at the time?

I've had quite a few that found a higher gear later. I mean, "Dazed and Confused" was not a hit when it first came out. It's a cult classic now. "Sahara" seemed to have a good afterlife. It didn't do well enough in our opening to make a second one. "Interstellar" did well, but, boy, the 10-year anniversary was like a brand-new release for the movie. Seventy percent of the people who come up to me now [want to talk about] "Interstellar": "I've seen it four times! I've seen it six times!"

"I loved the humor, the anarchy, the music and the amount of soul it had," says Matthew McConaughey, who stars in Andrew Patterson's "The Rivals of Amziah King."
PROVIDED BY BLACK BEAR PICTURES

"The Rivals of Amziah King," we're an independent film and independent films don't come out on a massive amount of screens. Is it a movie worth seeing? I believe it damn sure is. I hope it finds the right people.

I've seen "Serenity" a few times now, and I believe you and Anne Hathaway are exactly locked into the tone of what that film needs to be.

I think so, too. I enjoyed making that movie. Anne and I have worked together a few times, and I think we're pretty good at locking in and not trespassing on each other's energy. I applaud her for that. Not many people saw that movie, but it's worth checking out. That's a trippy little film – it's oddly cool.

Speaking of "Interstellar," have you seen "The Odyssey" yet?

No, I've been out of the country. I just got back from Italy and as soon as I got back, boom! We hit the trail [promoting "Amziah King"]. But I'm looking forward to seeing that this weekend. My son and I are going to see it in IMAX.

Have you ever reached out to Christopher Nolan about working together again, like, "Hey, where was my role in 'Oppenheimer' or 'The Odyssey?' "

Not directly. We'd both enjoy the prospect of working together again on the right thing. Part of why he's really good at what he does is he has a singular obsession with each film and that's its own universe. He said the film that made him come to me for "Interstellar" was "Mud." And I'm not going to throw that in the category of ones that no one's seen – I think that got its head above the waterline.

But as far as Nolan goes, it'd be fun strapping the boots on again and going to work. It's a full commitment to work with him and no one's more committed.

Panettiere

Continued from Page 1D

She starred as Kirby Reed in the "Scream" slasher film franchise, appearing in 2011's "Scream 4," 2022's "Scream" and 2023's "Scream VI." She also starred in the films "Bring It On: All Or Nothing," "I Love You, Beth Cooper" and "Raising Helen."

Book details child stardom, addiction, brother's death

In her candid memoir released this year, "This Is Me: A Reckoning," Panettiere chronicled childhood fame, laying bare her crosses with nefarious actors in her teens and addiction as an adult. In interviews about the memoir, Panettiere reflected that she was "groomed" to be a "little soldier" throughout her early career.

"Grown-ups gave me positive attention when – as an actor – I failed, got sick, screamed and cried, killed, grieved, and suffered. Reality merged with my imagination and burrowed into my core memories, where all my shame and trauma lives," Panettiere wrote in her memoir. "I've often wondered whether – unintentionally – I've brought on my traumas because I'm wired to think they're good for me."

Born Aug. 21, 1989, Panettiere was raised in Palisades, New York, by former soap actress Lesley R. Vogel and Alan Lee "Skip" Panettiere, a former captain with the New York City Fire Department. She began appearing in television commercials before she turned 1 and spent the rest of her life in front of the camera.

She was one of the youngest Grammy nominees, earning a nomination for best spoken word album for children for "A Bug's Life Read-Along." She also earned nominations for the Golden Globe Awards, Young Artist Awards, People's Choice Awards and Critics' Choice Television Awards, winning a Teen Choice Award in 2007 for choice TV actress in a drama for "Heroes."

When she was a teen, Panettiere's team gave her "happy pills" – an amphetamine, Panettiere believed – before interviews and red carpets to help her focus. Panettiere wrote in her memoir that this habit would "forever change" her world.

"At 16, they were the gateway drug that ushered me toward the good of pharmaceuticals and the downfall of addiction," she wrote.

Elsewhere, the actress wrote that her turn on "Nashville" often reflected the real-life confusion she felt.

"Juliette Barnes had postpartum depression, and an alcohol and pill problem, and a divorce on the horizon. She was erratic, an absentee mother, and fought with everyone, including her fans.

"Every time I read the day's script, it was like I was looking in a funhouse mirror, seeing a distorted reflection of myself. I can't tell you how lost this made me feel," Panettiere wrote.

Hayden Panettiere, who plays an energetic cheerleader on NBC's superhero drama series "Heroes," works out with her trainer Jonathan Beran, at West Hollywood gym Crunch in April 2007. DAN MACMEDAN/USA TODAY

Her substance misuse is not the only struggle the Panettiere family has experienced. Panettiere wrote in her book that her brother, Jansen, was smoking crack and snorting heroin before he died in 2023 at age 28. At the time, the family revealed the cause of death as "cardiomegaly [enlarged heart], coupled with aortic valve complications."

'This Is Me' memoir unpacks relationship with daughter

In the throes of postpartum depression after having her daughter, Kaya, Panettiere wrote that she became addicted to alcohol and Klonopin, a central nervous system depressant. At one point, a doctor told her she'd "be dead within five years" if she didn't stop drinking, she wrote.

The actress shares Kaya, 11, with her former fiancé, Wladimir Klitschko, a Ukrainian professional boxer.

During this time, Panettiere said, the first thing she thought of when she woke up was alcohol: "Not my child, not my job, and not the rest of my life. I needed a drink to function." Klitschko then asked for full custody of their daughter, worrying about her being in Panettiere's care.

The actress detailed the move to give over full custody in an appearance on Jay Shetty's "On Purpose" podcast in May. "The idea that anybody would think that I would just give away my child and be OK with it is heartbreaking," she told Shetty. "It couldn't be further from the truth. It became this horrible cycle for years of battling depression and anxiety and alcoholism and substance abuse, and just me trying to find my way back."

Panettiere had opened up about the criticism on an episode of "Red Table Talk" in 2022. She said that the move to give up custody "wasn't a discussion" and that Klitschko thought "I could choose to snap out of it." At the time she signed the papers, she said, she believed Kaya would come back to live with her when she got healthy, "but that didn't happen."

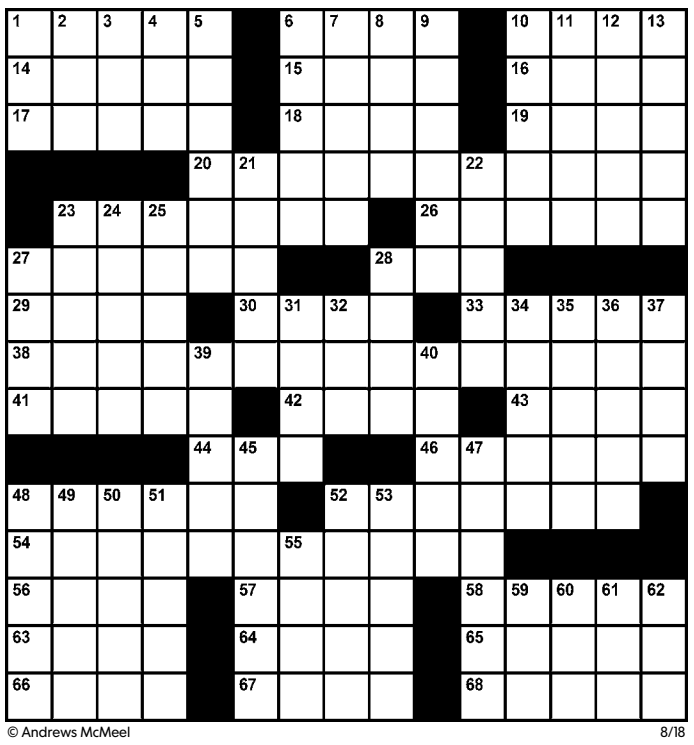
"I did not have a good reaction to it. I went like 'mother lion.' I would have burnt the world down for my child," she told Shetty, but she eventually realized Kaya had started building a "beautiful life" in Ukraine.

USA TODAY CROSSWORD

EDITED Amie Walker

BY Michael Drusedum & Jason Reuben

CRUNCH TIME



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ACROSS

1 Like the deity Xipe Totec
6 Bubble bath stuff
10 Rankings above corporals (Abbr.)
14 "Put me in, ___!"
15 Raindrop sound
16 Voyage
17 "Same here!"
18 Skin condition
19 Italian meat-based sauce
20 Program designed to prevent "burn-in"
23 Pittsburgh football player
26 Handy types
27 Rice dish with saffron
28 U-turn from NNW
29 Sicilian peak
30 "Yeah, su-u-ure"
33 "Everywhere you want to be" cards
38 Trash service
41 Scornful look
42 An apple for Apple, e.g.
43 Bread often served with hummus
44 It's "just a number"
46 Warmup band
48 West Texas city
52 Made it to the Olympic podium
54 Person who helps mediate disputes
56 Toolbar heading
57 Pop-ups' paths
58 Restless
63 Toaster waffle brand
64 Puerto ___
65 Photographer Arbus
66 Crystal ball user
67 ___ USA
68 Trade fairs

DOWN

1 Cooling systems, for short
2 Metaphor for a chaotic place
3 Smidgen
4 ___ mode (hybrid vehicle setting, often)
5 Wedge-shaped hand tool
6 Result from picking up a 7-10 split
7 Stomach sore
8 Over
9 Doesn't save
10 Wander off course
11 "Take This to Your ___" (Fall Out Boy album)
12 Tony the ___ (Frosted Flakes mascot)
13 Victor Wembanyama's 67-Across
21 Insurance filing
22 Kitchen tool with holes, or a metaphorical faulty memory
23 The Devil
24 High-strung
25 Fill with joy
27 Church benches
28 Doe's mate
31 Unit of hay
32 "Discreet Music" artist Brian
34 Push into action
35 River that served as a backdrop for the 2024 Olympics' opening ceremony
36 Paid for some cards
37 One of an estimated 100-400 billion in the Milky Way
39 Dry-___ marker
40 "Imagine Me & You" star Matthew
45 Racing vehicle
47 Pride Month celebration with floats
48 Many fencing blades
49 Climber's resting area
50 WNBA player Bueckers
51 Performer in a play
52 Hajj destination
53 ___ salts
55 Lake named after an Indigenous people
59 Veto
60 Keg component
61 ___-cone
62 Hai, in English

Monday's Answer

S	M	O	G			L	O	P	S		I	R	I	S
C	O	N	E		B	E	R	R	Y		M	E	R	E
O	B	E	D	I	E	N	C	E	S	C	H	O	O	L
F	I	N		S	A	T	A	N		H	O	R	N	E
F	L	I	G	H	T			U	S	A		D	M	C
S	E	L	A				A	S	P	E	N		E	A	T
			S	T	A	S	H		A	C	O	R	N	S
		O	P	E	N	S	E	C	R	E	T			
R	A	I	S	E	D		E	P	S		T	A	P	
A	L	L		T	I	A	R	A			E	R	A	S
T	O	P	T	I	E	R			H	U	R	T	L	E
		A	I	M		D	A	T	E	S		D	E	N
C	H	I	N	E	S	E	C	H	E	C	K	E	R	S
A	U	N	T		I	N	T	E	L		A	C	M	E
P	E	T	S		S	T	I	E	S		L	O	O	S

8/17

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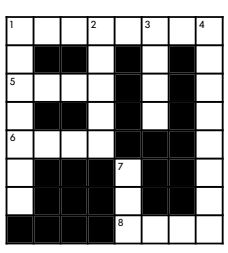
TXTPERT



8/18

Across
1. 49376436
5. 5323
6. 4766
8. 6366

Down
1. 4656486
2. 72366
3. 4653
4. 64876436
7. 846

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Today's theme
Elements

Use the phone keypad to decode the clues. For example: 2 could be A, B or C ... and 5678 could be LOST

Yesterday's solution 8/17

Numbers

More puzzles: **PLAY.usatoday.com**
Want solutions? **answers.usatoday.com**
Feedback: **feedback@usatoday.com**

SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 (no repeats).

		4		9	3			7
2				7				
1		6		5		2		
	9				4		5	
		3	7	6	5	9		
	6		1				4	
		2		8		6		1
				4				3
9			3	1		5		

8/18

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★☆☆☆

SUDOKU FUSION ON YOUR PHONE
puzzles.usatoday.com

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Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x2 box contains the numbers 1 through 6 (no repeats).

			3		5
	3	1			
	6	4	2		1
2		5	6	4	
			1	2	
1		6			

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★☆☆☆

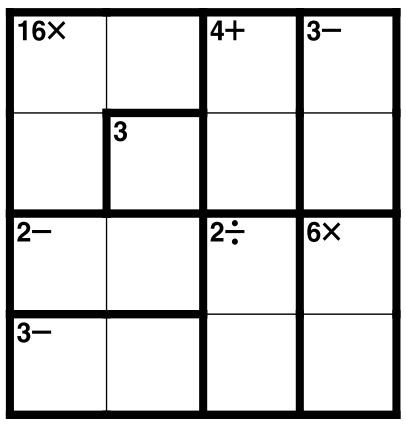
Monday's Answers

9	5	7	1	3	6	8	2	4
3	2	8	5	7	4	6	9	1
1	6	4	2	8	9	3	7	5
7	4	9	6	2	3	5	1	8
6	8	1	9	5	7	2	4	3
5	3	2	4	1	8	9	6	7
2	7	5	3	9	1	4	8	6
8	9	6	7	4	5	1	3	2
4	1	3	8	6	2	7	5	9

5	1	3	4	2	6
4	2	6	5	3	1
1	3	4	2	6	5
2	6	5	1	4	3
3	5	2	6	1	4
6	4	1	3	5	2

8/17

KENKEN



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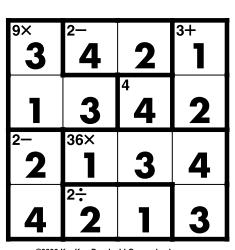
1. Each row and column must contain the numbers 1 through 4 without repeating.

2. The numbers within the heavily outlined boxes, called cages, must combine using the given operation (in any order) to produce the target numbers in the top-left corners.

3. Freebies: fill in single-box cages with the number in the top-left corner.

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



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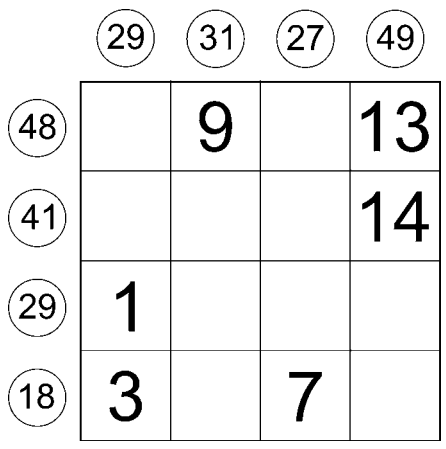
KUBOK 16

By Davide Coppo

Difficulty: **HARD**



Solution to Monday's puzzle

2	12	6	7
16	11	13	10
9	14	3	4
15	5	1	8

Enter the missing numbers from 1 to 16 without repetitions so that the sum of the four numbers in each row and column is the same as the corresponding circled number.

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8/18/26

Words

WORD ROUNDUP

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek 8/18

Find and Circle:
Four arachnids ☑☐☐☐
Four six-letter words with OO in the middle ☐☐☐☐
Three things that are the third of their kind ☐☐☐
Three Scandinavian countries ☐☐☐
"____ Night Football" ☐

Monday's answer: MOCCASIN SNEAKER SLIPPER LOAFER SANDAL SOCK BOOT CLOG / MOOSE MINK MOLE / BATMAN ROBIN / NEPAL INDIA / CENT

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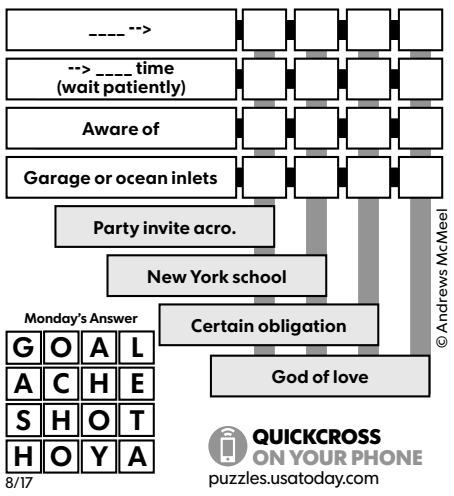
QUICKCROSS

By John Wilmes 8/18



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Monday's Answer

G	O	A	L
A	C	H	E
S	H	O	T
H	O	Y	A

8/17

QUICKCROSS ON YOUR PHONE
puzzles.usatoday.com

UP & DOWN WORDS

By David L. Hoyt and Russell L. Hoyt 8/18

1. **BIG**
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____ **GOD**

Clues:
1. Ringmaster's venue
2. Alpha figure
3. Off-leash space
4. Certain Monopoly square
5. Dinner table arrangement
6. Evening celestial sight
7. Ra, for one

Monday's Answer

DO	GOOD
GOOD	BOOK
BOOK	COVER
COVER	FOR
FOR	SURE
SURE	BET
BET	AGAINST

PLAY ONLINE PUZZLES.USATODAY.COM

© Andrews McMeel

BONUS CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Defensive ditch
5 Actress — Moore
9 Scatters seed
13 Curved structure
14 Commenced
15 Witty remark
16 Equal
17 "— came a spider..."
18 — Major
19 Baltimore player
21 Pencil's end
23 Contended
24 — and again
25 Touch
27 Marked with irregular spots
32 Singer — Knight
34 Cup handle
35 Brewed beverage
36 Cereal plant
37 Musical drama
39 Prohibit
40 Exist
41 Youngster
42 Expression of sorrow
45 Coiling stems
48 Frigid
49 No longer fashionable
50 People mover
52 Blood portion
55 Rat
58 Moon goddess
59 Drive
62 Ibsen character
64 Wide-eyed
65 Stir to action
66 Work
67 Hawaiian goose
68 Flows back
69 Uppity one

DOWN

1 Drawing showing roads and highways
2 Cookie brand
3 Maple genus
4 Flourished
5 Removed, in printing
6 The "I"
7 Homo sapiens
8 For the most part (2 wds.)
9 Bird's shrill cry
10 A pronoun
11 Sagacious
12 Practice boxing
14 Package of hay
20 Greasy
22 Legendary bird
25 Blaze of light
26 Consumed
27 Pips
28 Golf standard
29 Sticker
30 African antelope
31 Dimple
32 Horned animal
33 Card game for one
38 Buddy
43 School (Abbr.)
44 Instants
46 Prescribed amount
47 Hard liquor
50 Blond lock
51 Function
52 Make arrangements for
53 Sled
54 Before very long
56 Midday
57 Threesome
60 Unruly crowd
61 Tavern
63 Priestly vestment

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

D	O	O	M		G	R	I	P	E		A	C	H	E
A	N	N	O		R	A	C	E	S		S	O	A	R
D	U	E	T		A	V	E	R	T		C	L	I	O
A	S	S	O	R	T	E	D		I	D	E	A	L	S
			R	U	I	N		G	M	A	N			
B	R	A	I	D	S		P	L	A	N	T	E	R	S
R	I	N	S	E		S	L	A	T	E		V	E	T
E	D	I	T		B	L	A	R	E		D	I	V	A
E	G	O		P	E	A	C	E		P	A	C	E	R
D	E	N	O	U	N	C	E		M	O	T	T	L	E
			T	R	E	K		S	A	M	E			
W	A	S	H	E	D		S	L	I	P	P	E	R	Y
I	S	L	E		I	B	E	A	M		A	L	A	E
S	T	A	R		C	A	R	V	E		L	I	M	A
H	I	T	S		T	R	E	E	D		M	A	P	S

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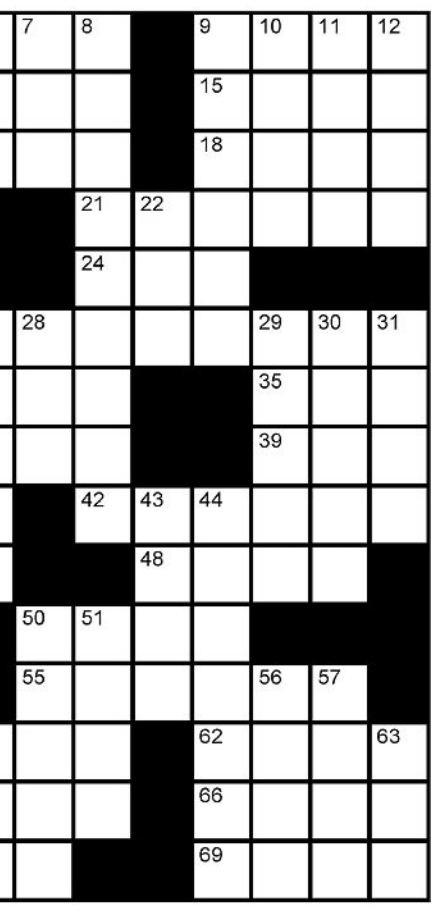

QUICKCROSS

By John Wilmes 8/18

© Andrews McMeel

Monday's Answer

G	O	A	L
A	C	H	E
S	H	O	T
H	O	Y	A

8/17

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PLAY ONLINE PUZZLES.USATODAY.COM

© Andrews McMeel

DON'T QUOTE ME®

© WIGGLES 3D GAMES

Management consultant Tom Peters makes this point.

Rearrange the words to complete the quote.
BREAKFAST CHANGE COMPANIES EAT GOT LEARN

"_____ HAVE ___ TO _____ TO ___ _____ FOR _____."

8/18

Monday's Answer: "Every time you see a great film, you find new things in it." - Roger Ebert

7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

CLUES	SOLUTIONS
1 the Seven Dwarfs, e.g. (6)	_____
2 relax awkwardly (5)	_____
3 the "H" in WHO (6)	_____
4 writer Nathaniel (9)	_____
5 extremely fat cat (11)	_____
6 Timothée acting sister (7)	_____
7 vortex (9)	_____

LI	HEA	MIN	WT	SLU
MP	RE	LTH	RNE	NAI
HA	NE	ZIL	ERS	LST
MAE	ROM	PAU	LIO	HO

Monday's Answers: 1. YELLOW 2. ABSORBED 3. RUDENESS 4. FLEXIBILITY 5. PRODUCTS 6. GRIFFIN 7. ALIGHT 8/18

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JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

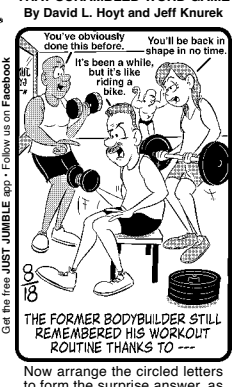
Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

UMYMM

EVRCO

SRUMEM

SIWYLE


You've obviously done this before.
You'll be back in shape in no time.
It's been a while, but it's like riding a bike.
8/18
THE FORMER BODYBUILDER STILL REMEMBERED HIS WORKOUT ROUTINE THANKS TO ---

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Facebook

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: SLASH JELLY CHROME WOBBLE
Answer: Getting her first customer after opening her own salon filled the stylist with — SHEAR JOY

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STREAMING

Disney goes back to ‘Camp Rock’ for a third encore

Kalia Richardson
USA TODAY

From left, Kevin, Joe and Nick Jonas reprise their roles as Connect 3 band members in “Camp Rock 3.” PROVIDED BY DAVID ASTORGA/DISNEY

Strangers still stop Maria Canals-Barrera, who starred in “Camp Rock” and “Wizards of Waverly Place,” on the street, and call her “my TV mom” and “my childhood.”

She played the selfless, no-nonsense mother to Demi Lovato’s Mitchie in the “Camp Rock” movies and says some of her favorite moments from the franchise were off camera: running to the laundromat with Lovato’s mom or listening to Lovato rehearse lyrics in her room. She calls the happenstance encounters a gift and says she’s still grappling with watching her onscreen counterparts, Lovato and the Jonas Brothers, grow up.

“It really did feel like 15 years had not gone by, but of course everybody’s in their 30s now,” Canals-Barrera, who has two daughters, tells USA TODAY. “With the Joe Bros, they’re all dads ... they all have daughters. And so I go, ‘You know what it’s like.’ ”

“Camp Rock 3,” streaming now on Disney+, passes the mic to a new generation of campers. When Connect 3, played by Nick, Joe and Kevin Jonas, return in search of an opener for their tour, the new campers, including stars Liamani Segura and Malachi Barton, vie for the coveted spot.

The 2026 sequel plays into the franchise’s success using revamped throwbacks such as “Play My Music,” table-topping dance numbers, and all-too-familiar lines. (“Whatever, major loser” is back.) Lovato and the Jonas Brothers also executive-produce and star in the musical movie.

As “Camp Rock 3” wrangles in familiar faces and catchy singles, fans and “Camp Rock” alums debate whom the sequel is for and whether it will resonate with audiences.

“Camp Rock,” the 2008 project that helped turn Lovato and the Jonas Brothers into Disney royalty, averaged 8.9 million viewers on the day of its release. It became one of the most-watched Disney Channel Original Movies, and its soundtrack charted at No. 3 on the Billboard 200 list.

“Camp Rock” broke containment, becoming a phenomenon among tweens and parents, says Ashley Spencer, the author of “Disney High: The Untold Story of the Rise and Fall of Disney Channel’s Tween Empire.”

“They were covering magazines, they were in the tabloids,” Spencer tells USA TODAY. “So that was something that Disney and Disney Channel could really only dream about manufacturing, an original concept that becomes that huge today.”

Disney since has released an arsenal of reboots with such shows as “Raven’s Home,” which ran for six seasons, “High School Musical: The Musical: The Series,” which ran for four seasons, and “Wizards Beyond Waverly Place” (in which Canals-Barrera reprises her role), which ran for three seasons, wrapping this month.

Despite their success, Spencer argues the brand’s reach has changed. “They’re no longer even targeting the same tweens that they were in the 2000s,” she says.

“They’re going for 8-year-olds, 6-year-olds, very young. So the content is staying very young, and they’re capitalizing on nostalgia by bringing back those actors and the characters to hook the parents or single adults who want to tune in. But it’s not hitting because it’s not for you anymore.”

Disney Channel, Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network once had a strong hold on youth’s attention, but in recent years, streaming platforms, particularly YouTube, have fractured targeted audiences. Spencer believes one way to draw older target markets is by following the protagonists as they age, such as the canceled “Lizzie McGuire” reboot that centered around her life in her 30s.

“You’re really leaning into that nostalgia and that goodwill that you’ve garnered with the Gen Z and millennials,” Spencer says. “But are they going to feel passionate about this new product? Probably not in the same way.”

Micah Sanders, 26, makes fan edits of Disney Channel shows and movies on his social media pages, and says he has watched “Camp Rock” and “Camp Rock 2: The Final Jam” more than 10 times. Following its release, he bought a Shane Gray (Joe Jonas) doll and was drawn by the uplifting message of earworms such as “This Is Me.” Sanders says he’s now rooting for the sequel and its new cast.

“Disney + and Disney Channel, in general, are doing a good job of building on that nostalgia and creating new content for a new generation, but also trying to obviously get the good graces from the older generation as well,” Sanders says.

“Camp Rock” alum Roshon, who played a camper and a rapper, adds that it’ll be hard to replicate Lovato’s signature sound or the tween sweat and tears that made the TV movie a hit.

“We had all of these talented people that worked and meshed together all in one place,” Roshon says.

“The Jonas Brothers and Demi’s voice, that collision of how it sonically made you feel was different. They were raspy and rock and roll, but it was groovy and soulful, too.”

Roshon, 35, highlighted his dance breaks and poked fun at his lack of dialogue in the films in a viral Instagram post this month. Although he doesn’t appear in the third installment, he adds that Disney has a special talent for reaching diverse audiences.

“I’m not even a little kid no more, but I’m walking around the house singing that damn ‘Camp Rock 3’ song,” Roshon says to USA TODAY, referring to the single “One Beat Away.” “So they got a way to do the ice cream truck, hypnotizing stuff. They’re very, very good at making you love their products and fall in love with their stories.”

“Camp Rock” and “Camp Rock 2” immortalized the camp experience, and its sing-alongs, bonfires, talent show and summer crushes made it a preteen fantasy.

As “Camp Rock 3” marks the brand’s latest attempt to repackage that late 2000s nostalgia by crafting replicas of the cafeteria, the bunk beds and the sprawling lake, Canals-Barrera believes the 2026 release delivers on its promise.

“Even though it was a different camp, it looked exactly like the other one, almost even more beautiful,” she says. “And that smell of the dirt and the trees and the leaves and the vibe and the music and the excitement, it was all there. We want that. The original fans want to be at camp again.”

NATION&WORLD EXTRA

Iran threatens to go on offensive

Diplomatic deadline passes without a deal

Parisa Hafezi and Katharine Jackson
REUTERS

WASHINGTON – Iran will shift to a "fully offensive" military posture because efforts to negotiate a permanent end to the war with the United States have stalled, a senior Iranian official told Reuters on Aug. 17, as Washington ruled out extending a temporary ceasefire agreement.

Outward progress toward peace talks and a resumption of oil tanker traffic through the strategic Strait of Hormuz has ground to a halt, threatening to extend the conflict that the United States and Israel launched with attacks on Iran on Feb. 28.

"Iranian entities must be prepared to escalate tensions in the Strait of Hormuz and wider region, as Iran will be ready to make decisions and take action on difficult decisions," the Iranian official said, adding that Tehran would conduct a "timely and precise" military attack to break the U.S. naval blockade if diplomacy failed.

A memorandum of understanding signed in June to end the war had given Iran and the United States until Aug. 17 to reach a final peace agreement. Signed on June 17, the memorandum set a 60-day time frame for a broader deal on Iran's nuclear program and U.S. sanctions.

The agreement, which declared the "immediate and permanent termination of military operations on all fronts," quickly unraveled over a dispute about control of the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow waterway through which a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas flowed before the war.

Asked by reporters on Aug. 17 if the United States was seeking to extend June's interim agreement, President Donald Trump said no.

In one glimmer of diplomacy, media reports said Trump had opened back-channel discussions with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which has become more powerful during the war and controls large parts of Iran's armed forces and the economy.

Axios, citing two sources with direct knowledge, reported that former Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard spoke with an Iraqi Kurdish leader with close ties to the IRGC, and that through this intermediary the United

See IRAN, Page 4NN

A drone view of a neighborhood with collapsed buildings, following an earthquake, in Pereira, Colombia Aug. 17.
JUAN FELIPE LEON/REUTERS

A TALE OF TWO BUILDINGS

How quake rescue efforts differed in Colombia, Venezuela

Julia Symmes Cobb and Sarah Morland
REUTERS

CALI, Colombia – At a flattened apartment block known as Los Cocos in northern Venezuela, civilians toiled with little support to pull the living and the dead from the rubble. In neighboring Colombia, when residential towers in Cali collapsed, officials poured in to help.

Devastating earthquakes weeks apart in Venezuela and Colombia have exposed sharply different government capacities to respond to disaster, according to witnesses in both countries, aid workers and a security firm. In Venezuela, civilians led rescue efforts after two back-to-back earthquakes in late June, finding survivors and victims as confusion, lack of equipment and delayed orders stymied the official response.

In Colombia, civilian volunteers were also vital in the first hours after the quake. But at least a dozen official entities were soon on the ground, coordinating the response in the hardest-hit cities, leading to hundreds of rescues in the crucial 72-hour window after the disaster.

Venezuela's twin 7.2- and 7.5-magnitude quakes, which struck especially hard in coastal La Guaira, led to a national death toll currently standing at 6,300 people. The Colombia quake, which had a similar magnitude and was felt in neighboring countries, killed at least 285 people, with some 380 still missing.

In Venezuela, soil instability and the shallowness of the tremors likely contributed to their toll, while the Colombia quake struck much deeper.

People work to remove debris from a collapsed building in La Guaira, Venezuela, on Aug. 7. LEONARDO FERNANDEZ VILORIA/REUTERS

However, Venezuela has been battered by shortages, hyperinflation and brain drain for years. The government blames sanctions by the United States and other countries, while critics say corruption has sapped state coffers as mismanagement and underinvestment have cratered the country's top industry, oil.

Venezuela's interim government has vehemently denied any problems in its response.

"We did not wait one, two or three days. We acted immediately," interim President Delcy Rodriguez told reporters in early July. She said 4,000 officials had been deployed the first day, rising to 14,000 the next, and lashed out at what she called a "media narrative" of a

See EARTHQUAKES, Page 4NN

> "It will take many years to return a sense of stability to the two countries, particularly for the children. The emergency has barely begun."
>
> **Mayerly Sanchez**
> World Vision coordinator

U.S. talks with Israel, Hamas end without resolution

Both sides at odds over key demands to end war

Alexander Cornwell
REUTERS

JERUSALEM – President Donald Trump's envoy and son-in-law Jared Kushner left Jerusalem on Aug. 17without a breakthrough after two days of talks with Israeli and Hamas leaders over a stalled U.S. plan to end the war in Gaza, with both sides standing firm on key demands.

Kushner met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel a day after meeting the political leader of Hamas in Egypt in a bid to revive the plan.

Israel has carried out air strikes and seized more territory in Gaza despite an October ceasefire, while Hamas has refused to give up its weapons.

Kushner described his nearly four-hour meeting with Netanyahu as "good." Kushner added that Hamas representatives said "all the right things."

"We could be seeing progress, you know in as little as 30 days, hopefully on starting to take some of the weapons out and hopefully, you know, filling in some of the tunnels as well in the next 60 to 90 days as well," Kushner told Fox News.

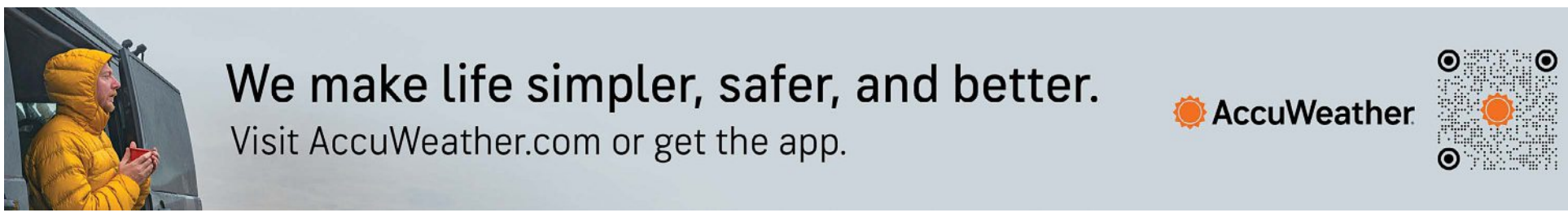
Trump in July announced that Hamas had agreed to lay down its arms in phases, under a 15-point roadmap put forward by his so-called Board of Peace to advance his plan, as Israel's military withdraws from Gaza.

Hamas said it agreed to the roadmap but implementation depends on Israel first meeting its own commitments, including halting attacks and withdrawing.

Netanyahu, whose ruling coalition is trailing in opinion polls ahead of an October national election, rejected the deal in August, insisting that Israel would not pull back until Hamas is completely disarmed.

See GAZA, Page 4NN

A salvage worker takes a break during the scrapping of rubble from a building that was destroyed during Israel's war in Gaza.
OMAR AL-QATTAA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

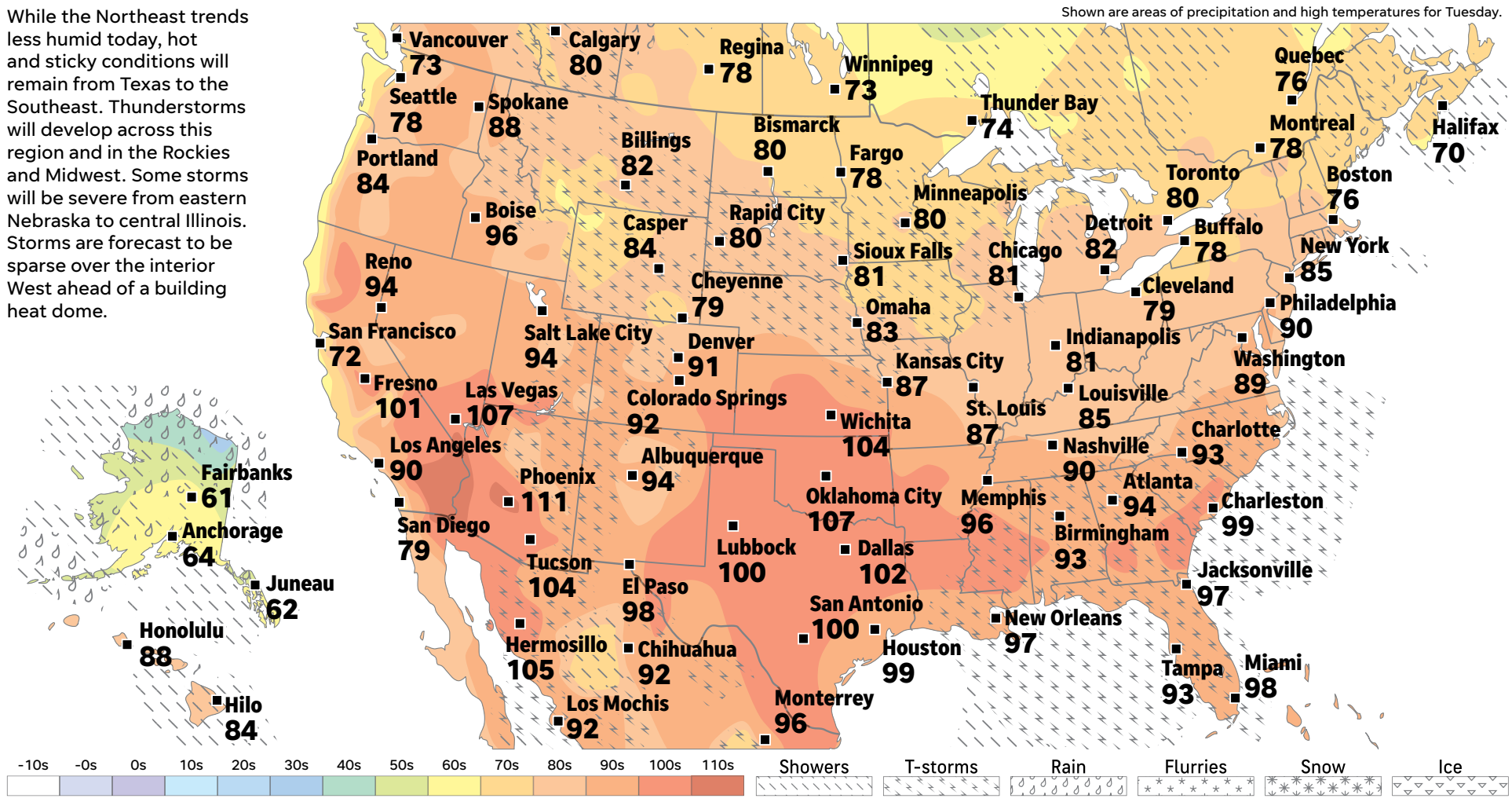


NATIONAL SUMMARY

While the Northeast trends less humid today, hot and sticky conditions will remain from Texas to the Southeast. Thunderstorms will develop across this region and in the Rockies and Midwest. Some storms will be severe from eastern Nebraska to central Illinois. Storms are forecast to be sparse over the interior West ahead of a building heat dome.

In the digital e-edition, you can click anywhere on the US map to get up-to-date forecasts, radar, MinuteCast® and more.

Shown are areas of precipitation and high temperatures for Tuesday.



MONDAY EXTREMES

NATIONAL (for the 48 contiguous states)

High: **113** at Needles, CA
Low: **36** at Walden, CO
Precip: **2.07"** at Clarksburg, WV

INTERNATIONAL (excludes Antarctica)

High: **123** at Omidieh, Iran
Low: **17** at Mt. Cook, New Zealand
Precip: **6.34"** at Chittagong, Bangladesh

TODAY IN HISTORY

Hurricane Bob was 45 miles south of Cape Hatteras, N.C., at 9 a.m. EDT on Aug. 18, 1991. It had sustained winds of 115 mph and gusts to 130 mph. Hurricane warnings were in effect from the Carolinas to Plymouth, Mass.

WEATHER TRIVIA™

Q: A golf ball will fly farther in warm, humid air or cool, dry air?

A: Warm, humid air

NATIONAL CITIES TUESDAY

● Denotes possible travel delays

	High/low/W	Air Quality
Aberdeen, SD	80/54/c	44
Abilene, TX	104/77/s	50
Accomac, VA	85/67/sh	45
Adrian, MI	82/66/pc	25
Akron, OH	79/63/s	75
Alamogordo, NM	98/70/s	46
Alexandria, VA	90/68/s	51
Alliance, OH	79/62/s	75
Amarillo, TX	101/72/s	75
● Ames, IA	79/62/t	75
Anderson, SC	96/72/s	54
● Appleton, WI	78/57/t	25
Asheville, NC	87/64/pc	51
Ashland, OH	80/64/s	75
Athens, GA	96/70/s	45
Augusta, GA	98/72/pc	44
Austin, TX	102/77/s	75
Bartlesville, OK	105/74/s	60
● Battle Creek, MI	80/64/pc	25
Bedford, IN	82/64/pc	49
Binghamton, NY	76/59/s	40
Bluffton, SC	100/79/sh	47
Bremerton, WA	78/54/pc	44
Brockton, MA	80/63/pc	25
Brownwood, TX	104/72/s	51
● Burlington, IA	80/66/t	75
Burlington, NC	92/70/t	52
Burlington, VT	80/60/pc	45
Cambridge, OH	81/61/pc	33
Camdenton, MO	94/71/t	38
Canandaigua, NY	78/61/pc	40
Canton, OH	80/63/s	75
Carlsbad, NM	101/70/s	66
Chambersburg, PA	85/61/s	45
Cherry Hill, NJ	88/66/s	55
Cincinnati, OH	80/65/pc	52
Clarksville, TN	89/67/pc	50
● Coldwater, MI	81/66/pc	25
Columbus, OH	81/65/s	51
Corning, NY	79/52/s	33
Corpus Christi, TX	98/76/s	75
● Daytona Beach, FL	93/76/t	75
Deming, NM	97/67/s	55
DeRidder, LA	98/77/s	53
● Des Moines, IA	80/65/t	75
● Detroit, MI	82/65/pc	75
Devils Lake, ND	74/53/pc	40
Dover, NH	78/62/c	25
El Paso, TX	98/74/s	75
Elmira, NY	80/53/s	33
Erie, PA	79/66/s	34
Eugene, OR	88/53/s	25
Evansville, IN	86/68/s	75
Fall River, MA	82/65/pc	25
Farmington, NM	96/62/pc	45
Fayetteville, NC	97/75/t	55
Fond du Lac, WI	79/59/t	25
Fort Myers, FL	95/80/s	75
Fort Smith, AR	106/79/s	45
Framingham, MA	81/61/pc	25
Freeport, IL	77/62/t	25
Fremont, OH	82/67/s	38
Fort Collins, CO	88/59/pc	75
Gadsden, AL	92/65/s	44
● Gainesville, FL	93/78/t	75
● Galesburg, IL	79/65/s	25
Gastonia, NC	95/72/s	55
Glen Rose, TX	107/77/s	54
Gonzales, LA	97/78/t	54
Great Falls, MT	84/54/pc	58
● Green Bay, WI	77/54/t	25
Greenville, SC	93/70/s	54
Hackensack, NJ	87/69/pc	84
Hagerstown, MD	86/63/s	45
Hattiesburg, MS	101/77/t	32
Henderson, KY	86/66/s	75
Hendersonville, NC	89/65/pc	51
Herkimer, NY	81/58/s	27
● Hillsdale, MI	81/66/pc	25
● Holland, MI	80/66/t	75
Hornell, NY	78/56/s	35
Houma, LA	94/77/t	50
● Howell, MI	84/66/s	75
Hutchinson, KS	105/71/s	40
Hyannis, MA	77/68/pc	25
Indianapolis, IN	81/68/s	75
● Iowa City, IA	80/64/t	36
Ithaca, NY	77/54/s	40
● Jackson, MS	103/77/t	75
Jackson, TN	91/69/pc	46
● Jacksonville, FL	97/77/t	75
Jacksonville, NC	96/76/t	52
Kent, OH	80/63/s	25
● Kewanee, IL	78/66/t	25
Keyser, WV	85/59/s	43
Kinston, NC	96/74/t	52
Knoxville, TN	87/67/pc	51
Lafayette, IN	81/67/s	28
Lafayette, LA	96/78/t	50
● Lakeland, FL	96/78/t	75
● Lansing, MI	83/64/s	25
Las Cruces, NM	95/68/s	51
Lebanon, PA	86/60/s	55
● Leesburg, FL	92/78/t	75
Levittown, PA	88/65/s	55
● Lincoln, IL	82/67/s	25
Louisville, KY	85/69/s	75
Lubbock, TX	100/73/s	75
Manitowoc, WI	79/60/t	25
Mansfield, OH	79/64/s	39
Marshall, NC	85/63/t	50
Marshfield, WI	76/52/t	25
Massillon, OH	80/63/s	75
McLean, VA	89/66/s	51
● Melbourne, FL	95/76/t	75
Memphis, TN	96/78/pc	61
Middletown, NY	84/59/pc	38
Milford, MA	81/61/pc	25
● Milwaukee, WI	80/65/t	25
Monroe, MI	83/67/s	75
● Monroe, LA	104/79/pc	58
● Montgomery, AL	98/73/t	43
Muncie, IN	79/66/s	40
Murfreesboro, TN	88/65/pc	50
Naples, FL	93/80/s	75
Nashville, TN	90/67/pc	50
Neptune, NJ	82/71/pc	70
New Bedford, MA	81/64/pc	25
● New Bern, NC	95/75/t	52
New Philadelphia, OH	80/61/s	75
Newark, OH	81/60/s	51
Newton, NJ	85/58/s	50
New York, NY	85/71/pc	84
Norwich, CT	82/60/pc	40
● Ocala, FL	92/78/t	75
Oklahoma City, OK	107/76/s	70
Opelousas, LA	96/76/t	50
● Oshkosh, WI	77/58/t	25
Palm Beach, FL	95/81/t	75
Palm Springs, CA	113/85/pc	84
Panama City, FL	92/80/pc	75
● Pekin, IL	81/69/t	25
Pensacola, FL	96/78/t	75
● Peoria, IL	81/68/t	25
Petersburg, VA	90/70/pc	48
Phoenix, AZ	111/90/s	90
● Port Huron, MI	81/62/s	39
Portsmouth, NH	79/66/c	25
Poughkeepsie, NY	84/57/pc	38
Providence, RI	82/67/pc	46
Pueblo, CO	100/66/pc	75
Quincy, MA	78/63/pc	25
Redding, CA	103/66/pc	70
Reno, NV	94/63/s	75
Ravenna, OH	80/62/s	25
Richmond, IN	82/64/pc	50
Rochester, NY	77/61/pc	33
● Rockford, IL	80/64/t	25
Ruidoso, NM	85/60/pc	51
Salem, OR	86/54/s	25
Salina, KS	103/71/s	40
Salinas, CA	74/56/pc	25
Salisbury, MD	88/69/sh	67
San Angelo, TX	101/71/s	48
Sarasota, FL	93/81/t	75
Savannah, GA	100/76/t	42
● Sheboygan, WI	81/62/t	25
Shelby, NC	93/71/s	55
Sherman, TX	106/82/s	49
Shreveport, LA	105/79/s	60
Silver City, NM	90/64/pc	49
● Sioux Falls, SD	81/60/t	29
Somerset, PA	76/56/s	50
Somerville, NJ	87/62/s	50
● South Bend, IN	80/67/pc	25
Spartanburg, SC	93/72/s	54
● Springfield, IL	83/68/s	25
Springfield, MO	97/74/s	45
● St. Augustine, FL	93/77/t	75
St. Cloud, MN	78/51/pc	40
St. George, UT	104/77/pc	25
Staunton, VA	84/61/sh	41
● Stevens Point, WI	78/53/t	25
Stockton, CA	98/62/pc	48
Stroudsburg, PA	85/58/s	50
● Stuart, FL	96/79/t	75
● Sturgis, MI	79/66/pc	25
Tallahassee, FL	96/76/t	75
Thibodaux, LA	95/77/t	50
● Topeka, KS	90/69/t	45
● Tuscaloosa, AL	98/74/pc	57
Utica, NY	79/57/pc	25
Ventura, CA	74/63/s	39
Victorville, CA	102/67/s	77
Vineland, NJ	87/64/s	55
Visalia, CA	100/66/pc	49
Washington, DC	89/72/s	51
Watertown, SD	77/55/c	38
Wausau, WI	78/52/t	25
Waynesboro, PA	84/60/s	45
White Plains, NY	84/65/pc	50
Wichita Falls, TX	108/78/s	55
Wilmington, DE	87/66/s	67
● Wilmington, NC	98/76/t	55
● Wisconsin Rapids, WI	77/53/t	25
Wooster, OH	78/60/s	75
Worcester, MA	79/64/pc	25
York, PA	85/61/s	55

Air Quality Index: 0-50, Good; 51-100, Moderate; 101-150, Unhealthy for sensitive groups; 151-200, Unhealthy; 201-300, Very unhealthy; 301-500, Hazardous

INTERNATIONAL CITIES

	Tuesday High/low/W	Wednesday High/low/W
● Acapulco	93/79/pc	93/78/t
● Addis Ababa	73/56/r	74/55/r
Algiers	97/73/s	94/77/s
Amman	88/66/s	92/71/s
● Amsterdam	71/63/sh	71/61/sh
Ankara	88/60/s	92/60/s
● Asuncion	79/57/pc	67/53/c
Athens	89/69/s	90/70/s
Auckland	57/45/s	56/39/s
Baghdad	113/86/s	109/88/s
Bangkok	95/81/sh	93/80/r
Beijing	89/70/r	89/73/pc
Beirut	89/78/s	88/77/s
Belgrade	84/64/t	91/72/s
Berlin	68/60/r	66/57/sh
Bogota	65/50/sh	68/48/r
Brussels	73/64/sh	71/59/c
Bucharest	95/64/s	90/64/pc
Budapest	78/61/pc	86/65/s
Buenos Aires	54/46/c	57/47/s
Cairo	93/75/pc	94/74/pc
Cape Town	66/49/pc	66/50/pc
Caracas	91/78/t	91/77/t
Casablanca	87/68/s	86/68/c
● Colombo	88/80/r	89/79/r
Copenhagen	66/57/c	65/55/r
Damascus	94/64/s	97/65/s
● Dublin	66/54/sh	65/52/sh
Geneva	85/59/pc	91/66/s
Guatemala City	80/63/t	79/63/t
● Hanoi	92/81/r	88/79/r
Harare	78/45/s	76/48/s
Havana	93/70/pc	91/70/pc
Helsinki	65/53/c	65/53/pc
● Hong Kong	91/82/r	91/82/t
● Jakarta	92/77/sh	91/76/r
Jerusalem	84/68/s	86/68/s
Johannesburg	78/47/s	76/49/s
Kabul	93/68/pc	94/69/pc
Khartoum	103/84/s	105/83/s
Kyiv	85/55/sh	74/59/r
Kingston	93/80/pc	93/81/s
La Paz	44/30/r	55/26/s
Lagos	84/75/t	85/76/r
Lima	76/68/pc	76/66/s
Lisbon	84/68/s	81/66/s
London	79/60/c	76/55/pc
Madrid	102/69/s	97/67/s
● Manila	83/77/t	86/77/t
Mexico City	77/56/sh	77/57/sh
Milan	92/71/pc	94/72/t
Mombasa	84/70/s	84/70/pc
Montevideo	52/43/c	56/45/s
Montreal	78/64/pc	71/59/t
Moscow	73/61/c	65/53/r
● Nairobi	72/59/sh	74/55/c
● New Delhi	93/80/r	91/81/t
● Panama City	87/76/r	92/77/r
Paris	83/66/c	81/62/t
Port-au-Prince	100/74/s	99/73/pc
Rio de Janeiro	81/70/s	82/69/s
Riyadh	115/91/s	112/89/s
Rome	90/73/s	90/73/s
San Jose	82/70/r	83/70/r
● San Salvador	90/69/sh	89/69/r
Santiago	66/39/pc	65/42/pc
Sao Paulo	85/64/pc	86/62/pc
Sarajevo	83/56/t	92/62/s
Shanghai	90/80/pc	91/80/sh
Singapore	92/80/t	89/78/t
Stockholm	65/42/pc	67/46/pc
Sydney	65/50/sh	69/53/s
Taipei	93/80/t	91/79/t
● Tegucigalpa	85/68/t	84/65/t
Tehran	105/84/pc	105/84/pc
Tokyo	87/76/pc	90/76/s
● Toronto	80/66/s	76/56/t
Tunis	99/79/s	97/75/s
Vancouver	73/59/pc	71/59/pc
Vienna	73/64/sh	85/64/s
Warsaw	67/53/sh	70/59/sh
Yerevan	86/64/s	88/63/s
● Zagreb	85/60/pc	94/67/s
Zurich	80/60/sh	88/62/s

● Denotes possible travel delays Tuesday

Weather(W): **s**-sunny, **pc**-partly cloudy, **c**-cloudy, **sh**-showers, **t**-thunderstorms, **r**-rain, **sf**-snow flurries, **sn**-snow, **i**-ice.

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Civil rights group joins team seeking answers in death of Black teenager

Mississippi officials say investigation ongoing

Bianca Flowers and Kat Stafford
REUTERS

Attendees pray after Ben Crump, a lawyer for the family of Nolan Wells, announced the results of an independent autopsy of the young Black man whose body was found on an island off the coast of Mississippi after he traveled there over the Fourth of July weekend. PHOTOS BY JIM VONDRUSKA/REUTERS FILE

CHICAGO – The NAACP announced on Aug. 17 it had joined the legal team representing the family of Nolan Wells, an 18-year-old Black teen whose body was found on a Mississippi barrier island last month after a Fourth of July trip with three white friends.

The U.S. civil rights organization said its Office of General Counsel will work with the family's lawyers, including prominent civil rights attorney Ben Crump, to seek a comprehensive investigation and greater transparency from authorities into Wells' death.

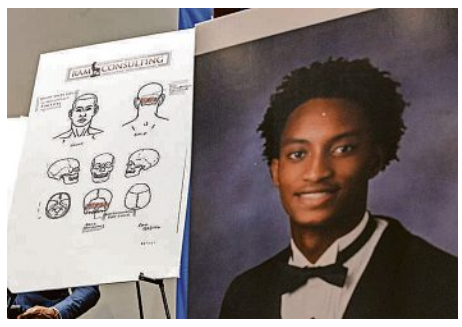
"We're taking up this fight to search for truth and transparency surrounding the death of Nolan Wells," Kristen Clarke, general counsel of the NAACP, said in a statement.

The NAACP's involvement underscores how Wells' death has evolved from a local investigation into a case drawing national scrutiny. Although authorities have not announced final findings or alleged foul play, questions raised by family members, civil rights leaders and others about race, transparency and accountability have fueled calls for greater scrutiny.

Last week, the Congressional Black Caucus issued a letter to U.S. Attorney General Todd Blanche and FBI Director Kash Patel urging the U.S. Department of Justice to launch an independent federal review of Wells' death. The case has also prompted broader conversations among some Black Americans about racism, safety in predominantly white spaces and disparities in attention to cases involving Black victims.

Clarke said the organization would bring additional investigative resources to ensure that "no stone is left unturned" in the Wells family's quest for answers.

Wells' body was found on July 6 on the northwestern end of Horn Island, a barrier island off the Mississippi Gulf Coast, after he went missing during a Fourth of July weekend trip there with friends from nearby Ocean Springs, Mississippi.



An independent autopsy commissioned by the family found that Nolan Wells' manner of death remained undetermined and the family continues to seek answers.

The Jackson County Sheriff's Office, which is leading the investigation, has said the case remains ongoing. Investigators have not publicly released final conclusions about how Wells died.

Crump previously said the family was seeking answers about discrepancies in accounts of Wells' final hours, including why his phone was found with one of the friends rather than with his body. He also cited unverified videos circulating online that purportedly showed Wells arguing with friends before he vanished.

An attorney for one of the friends could not be reached for comment.

An independent autopsy commissioned by the family found that Wells' manner of death remained undetermined. The results were announced at the organization's 117th national convention in Chicago in July.

The NAACP has long intervened in cases that drew national attention, helping push for investigations, legal action and public accountability in matters ranging from the brutal 1955 killing of Emmett Till to recent high-profile incidents involving Black Americans whose deaths prompted calls for answers.

"The world is watching and Nolan Wells' family deserves a thorough accounting of what happened," NAACP President and CEO Derrick Johnson said in the statement. "Our involvement in this case is part of our ongoing commitment to make sure those answers are pursued with urgency and respect for Black lives."

Mangione's state murder trial postponed after federal guilty plea

Luc Cohen and Dan Fastenberg
REUTERS

NEW YORK – Luigi Mangione's trial on New York state murder and weapons charges over the 2024 killing of a health insurance CEO was postponed on Aug. 17 , after the 28-year-old Ivy League graduate pleaded guilty last week to separate federal charges.

In court on Aug. 14, Mangione for the first time admitted to shooting 50-year-old UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson in Manhattan, a crime that was condemned by public officials but became emblematic of Americans' frustration with health insurance industry practices.

Mangione's lawyers cited his guilty plea to the federal stalking charges he faced in urging New York state Justice Gregory Carro to dismiss the state charges.

His lawyers argued that Mangione should not have to be punished for the same conduct twice under New York's law prohibiting double jeopardy.

The state trial had previously been scheduled to begin on Sept. 8. Mangione has pleaded not guilty to the state charges.

In a brief written order on Aug. 17, Carro gave prosecutors until Oct. 9 to respond to Mangione's motion. The judge set Mangione's next appearance in state court for Dec. 10, meaning the trial will not go forward in September.

A spokesperson for Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, who brought the state charges against Mangione, referred to a Aug. 14 statement indicating that the office was prepared to litigate the defense motions. Mangione's defense lawyers declined to comment.

Mangione entered his guilty plea in the federal case without reaching an agreement with prosecutors, and there was no guarantee that his acceptance of responsibility would result in leniency at sentencing.

Mangione is due to be sentenced in his federal case on Dec. 18. Federal prosecutors said on Aug. 14 that they intend to seek a life sentence, the maximum allowable.

In the state case, Mangione would face 25 years to life in prison if convicted of second-degree murder.

If Carro decides to dismiss the state case, it would eliminate the possibility of Mangione having to serve consecutive prison sentences in the two cases.

Bennett Gershman, a law professor at Pace University in New York, said it was unlikely Carro would dismiss the case on double jeopardy grounds.

New York state's double jeopardy law carves out exceptions for crimes that have different elements or are aimed at preventing "very different kinds of harm or evil."

The federal stalking charges to which Mangione pleaded guilty still require intent to kill, but do not require that the death occurs.

"The elements in stalking and the elements of murder are very, very distinguishable," Gershman said.

FINANCIAL MARKETS

Wall Street indexes slip as oil prices rise, retail results awaited

SinÉad Carew and Avinash P
REUTERS

Wall Street's three major indexes finished lower on Aug. 17 as investors waited for quarterly reports from large retailers to provide insights into U.S. consumer spending, while oil prices rose as the United States and Iran appeared no closer to a deal.

Oil futures settled up more than $2 per barrel as investor pessimism about diplomatic efforts to resolve the Iran war fanned global supply worries. The gain in oil provided support for the energy index, which finished up 0.87% and was the sole gainer among the S&P 500's 11 major industry sectors. Investors, with July's weak retail sales and jobs data fresh in their minds, were cautious as they waited for quarterly results from retailers. Home improvement company Home Depot is due to report on Aug. 18, and retail bellwether Walmart on Aug. 20.

"Concerns about recent softer data have the market being a bit tepid and waiting for retail earnings for direction," said Phil Blancato, chief market strategist at Osaic Wealth, who added that volume is often weak in August, when many traders take vacations. "There's a combination of summer doldrums and waiting for data on the consumer."

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 272.63 points, or 0.51%, to 53,459.78, the S&P 500 lost 40.7 points, or 0.52%, to 7,745.06 and the Nasdaq Composite lost 84.25 points, or 0.31%, to 26,644.91.

Except energy, all of the benchmark S&P 500's 11 major industry sectors lost ground with communications services and consumer staples both falling about 1.5% while financials and consumer discretionary lost a little over 1%.

The S&P 500 technology sector finished down nearly 0.2% after flitting between red and green during the session.

Trading in technology has been volatile with investors anxious about whether hefty spending on artificial intelligence will pay off.

Reuters reported on Aug. 14 that two people familiar with Anthropic's financials said the company, which is preparing for its initial public offering, forecast 2028 revenue of roughly $190 billion to $200 billion.

On Aug. 17 , gains in chip stocks were offset by declines in software with the PHLX semiconductor index rallying 1.6% while the S&P 500 Software & Services index sank 2.8%.

Microsoft and Meta Platforms provided the biggest drags on the S&P 500, with both declining more than 3%. Chip sector stocks provided the biggest index point boosts to the benchmark index with Micron Technology adding 4% and Applied Materials climbing 5.5%.

Investors are also waiting for results, due out next week, from leading AI chipmaker Nvidia, the world's most valuable company. In individual movers, U.S.-listed shares of Vista rallied 5.6% after Peter Thiel bought a 1% stake in the Latin American oil company. Declining issues outnumbered advancers by a 1.76-to-1 ratio on the NYSE, where there were 275 new highs and 226 new lows.

On the Nasdaq, 1,848 stocks rose and 3,106 fell as declining issues outnumbered advancers by a 1.68-to-1 ratio.

The S&P 500 posted 19 new 52-week highs and four new lows while the Nasdaq Composite recorded 88 new highs and 113 new lows.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is Aug. 18. On this date in:

1227: Genghis Khan died at 65. Born to a minor Mongol chieftain, he united tribes by force and rose to build an empire that spanned Asia. Even after his death, his troops obeyed his order to level the kingdom of Xi Xia.

1587: The first English child, Virginia Dare, was born in the Americas. She was the first granddaughter of Roanoke Island's English Gov. John White. By her third birthday, she had disappeared with the rest of the Roanoke colonists.

1920: The 19th Amendment was ratified, giving U.S. women the vote. Tennessee was the 36th and deciding state, approving the amendment by just one vote.

1927: Eleanor Rosalynn Smith was born in Plains, Georgia. After marrying her neighbor Jimmy Carter, she helped run the family peanut, fertilizer and seed business; had four children; and became first lady with a focus on promoting the performing arts and mental health.

1939: Adolf Hitler established the Reich Committee for the Scientific Registering of Hereditary and Congenital Illnesses, part of his Aktion T4 euthanasia program, and required midwives and doctors to fill out questionnaires about institutionalized children with disabilities.

1958: After multiple rejections by American publishers, Vladimir Nabokov's controversial novel "Lolita" was published in the United States, two years after it came out in Paris. "It transmutes, as only a great book could, this diseased man," the Nation wrote.

1962: The Beatles performed for the first time as John, Paul, George and Ringo. Ringo Starr's first gig drumming with the Fab Four was a horticultural society's annual dance in Birkenhead, across the Mersey River from Liverpool. The band had fired Pete Best two days earlier.

1963: James Meredith, who had integrated the University of Mississippi as a transfer student less than a year before, graduated with a degree in political science. His wife and son attended the ceremony. He went on to earn a law degree from Columbia University.

1964: The International Olympic Committee announced that South Africa would be barred from the summer Olympics in Tokyo due to the country's apartheid policies that segregated sports. The country would not be allowed back until 1992, after it repealed all apartheid laws.

1969: The Woodstock Music and Art Fair ended in Bethel, New York. Organizer Max Yasgur told the crowd they had proven to the world "that half a million kids can get together for fun and music and have nothing but fun and music."

1990: President George H. W. Bush signed the Ryan White CARE Act, funding services for low-income people with HIV and AIDS. White, a teenager, became an AIDS activist after contracting HIV from a blood transfusion for hemophilia. He had died in April, shortly before his high school graduation.

1991: Four of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's top officials demanded that he turn power over to his vice president. When he refused, they put him under house arrest. The next morning, they announced the vice president had taken over in a coup.

– USA TODAY Network

Indonesian mother 'grateful' after emergency birth

Ananda Teresia
REUTERS

NAGEKEO, Indonesia – As the earth shook around her, tearing apart homes, buildings, and bridges in eastern Indonesia, Maria Florida Nogo Kelen was giving birth to her daughter. The 39-year-old went in for emergency surgery as a 7.7 earthquake and a series of aftershocks ravaged the East Nusa Tenggara province, the country's worst disaster since 2022, fighting off the tremors and her declining health to deliver her fourth child.

"During the surgery, I was not afraid," said Maria, who lives in the region of Nagekeo, close to the quake's epicenter. "I had to be healthy for my kids."

Her delivery came two months ahead of schedule due to a complicated pregnancy that posed risks for both Maria and her child, forcing doctors to use flashlights to perform the surgery during intermittent power outages as the hospital building shook mercilessly.

Her doctors said Maria could have suffered from a fatal seizure had they delayed the birth.

Maria Florida Nogo Kelen, who gave birth via caesarean section during the earthquake's aftershocks, at a hospital in Nagekeo, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, Aug. 17. EDGAR SU/REUTER

"We had no choice," said Maria's obstetrician, Yona Sara Pardede. "As humans we were afraid ... the surgery was difficult as she was a small baby. I ask God, please help us. We don't even have a ventilator."

Finally, her daughter, Gempita, was born, named after the Indonesian word for earthquake: "Gempa."

The Aug. 15 disaster, the country's deadliest since a 2022 quake killed hundreds in West Java, has so far killed 54 people across the East Nusa Tenggara province.

Many medical professionals across Indonesia's southernmost province treated people with injuries outside in tents as the quake damaged hundreds of hospitals and homes. On Aug. 17, rescuers scoured the area for people feared trapped under rubble and were sending aid via planes, authorities said. Residents sheltered outside in evacuation tents with several saying they needed clean water and food. Most were afraid to return to their homes for fear of aftershocks. Born at just 2.87 pounds during aftershocks, Gempita remained stable in an incubator placed on a patch of grass in a tent outdoors as the sun beat down on Nagekeo.

Maria, who suffered a hemorrhage after her birth, said she was grateful to still be alive.

"I was very grateful for the doctors, even when the room had collapsed, they did not abandon us," she said.

Iran

Continued from Page 1NN

States delivered a message to IRGC commander General Ahmad Vahidi. Fox News later reported that Trump confirmed the report in a telephone interview.

The Trump administration was concerned whether Iranian negotiators across the table actually spoke for the IRGC, Axios said, at a time when Reuters was reporting that Vahidi had become a pivotal figure. Vahidi responded that he was aligned with the Iranian negotiators, Axios said.

"I can't go into the details of it, but I will say that the conversations between the U.S. government and different areas of the Iranian government at all areas is probably more robust than it's maybe ever been," Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and special envoy, said in a separate interview with Fox News Chanel's Chief Foreign Correspondent Trey Yingst on Aug. 17.

Iran said point 5 of the Memorandum of Understanding gave it the right to manage the strait, which it shares with U.S. ally Oman, while the United States rejected that interpretation. Hostilities resumed as Iran began firing on vessels it said were trying to sail through Hormuz on an unapproved route, and Trump said on July 7 that the pact was "over."

The Iranian official told Reuters the United States must meet the entirety of the agreement's provisions within a few weeks as a precondition for further negotiations.

Iran has separately been negotiating an agreement on managing the strait with Oman and says they are close to a deal. Trump responded to those negotiations with a threat against the Gulf state, a longstanding U.S. security partner.

"If Oman gets in the way, we'll bomb the (expletive) out of them," Trump told Fox News.

Thousands of people have been killed in the conflict, mainly in Iran and Lebanon. Iran has bombed U.S. military bases and infrastructure in countries including Oman, Jordan, Kuwait, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

Trump warned Americans in a speech at a rally on Aug. 14 to prepare for continued high fuel prices as a result of the war.

Gaza

Continued from Page 1NN

Kushner said the United States will not restrict Israel's right to defend itself if there are imminent threats. This point, Kushner said, has to be clarified to determine what that means.

"Every weapon, light and heavy, and every tunnel," said an official with Trump's Board of Peace, adding that Israel retained the right of self-defense and that Israel would be able to "act accordingly" if Hamas "resorts to terror, violence or attempts to rearm."

However, the official said Netanyahu was told that Hamas has committed to fully disarm and "cease immediately all military activity, including rearmament and tunnel digging."

An Israeli official said Netanyahu was clear in the meeting that troops would not withdraw and that the military would continue to operate as it sees necessary, including targeting Palestinian militants who took part in the Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel that triggered the war in Gaza.

Netanyahu and Kushner also agreed that Gaza's reconstruction would not start until Hamas is disarmed, the Israeli official said.

"We're very committed to the fact that we have a plan to rebuild Gaza, but we will not allow Gaza to be rebuilt until the demilitarization occurs," Kushner said. "Nobody wants to put more money into a place that's gone on for so long if it's just going to be taken over by terrorists or blown up again."

Hamas has demanded that Israel adhere to the ceasefire and withdraw its forces from Gaza. Both sides have disputed the sequencing of how Trump's plan should be implemented.

More than 1,200 Palestinians and four Israeli soldiers have been killed in Gaza since last October, according to Gazan health officials and the Israeli military.

Netanyahu and Kushner also agreed to establish a working group covering disarmament and another on sanitation, clean water and other public health issues, the prime minister's office and the Board of Peace official said separately.

Hamas said on Aug. 15 that it asked the Board of Peace to "compel" Israel to implement its obligations under the first phase of the ceasefire plan that has yet to lead to a permanent resolution in the war-torn region. OMAR AL-QATTAA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

U.S. and Israeli officials have previously said that reconstruction could happen in areas of Gaza under Israeli control or a new Palestinian technocratic government. The Board of Peace had said that while rifles would be prohibited in Gaza, some personal weapons would be permitted under Palestinian law.

Netanyahu is facing a tough reelection campaign, and diplomats say it is unlikely Israel's longest-serving prime minister would make any concessions over Gaza before the Oct. 27 vote. Most Israelis want the war in Gaza to continue, polls show.

Kushner and Trump's Board of Peace envoy for Gaza Nickolay Mladenov, a former United Nations official who is widely seen as leading efforts to implement the plan to end the war, were in Israel after meeting with Hamas political leader Khalil Al-Hayya in Egypt on Aug. 16.

It marked Kushner's second known meeting with representatives of Hamas, the Palestinian militant group designated a terrorist movement by the United States.

Kushner previously met Hamas officials alongside U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff in October 2025, helping clinch a deal that led to a ceasefire in Gaza and the release of remaining hostages seized by Hamas.

Earthquakes weeks apart in Venezuela and Colombia have exposed sharply different government capacities to respond to disaster. JUAN FELIPE LEON/REUTERS

Earthquakes

Continued from Page 1NN

chaotic response.

In La Guaira, most buildings of a landmark 1,100-unit social housing block named after late President Hugo Chavez collapsed in the June quakes. Families, neighbors and some local officials spent weeks digging through rubble with bare hands, buckets, and sticks, helped by international rescue teams and a small contingent of Venezuelan federal officials.

Volunteers arriving from other states provided generators, food, water and other supplies. Locals carried bodies out on old mattresses and other bits of debris until one or two forensic specialists appeared several days afterward with body bags.

Locals called for heavy machinery and more official presence at the site, known colloquially as Los Cocos. A month later, two cranes were operating along with other heavy machinery to remove rubble. Civil protection officials who had tunneled six stories into the rubble needed multiple body bags to contain decaying remains, which they removed with the help of soldiers. An army sergeant whose unit was finding and removing bodies said some of the equipment was broken and they were approaching those still searching for family members to assess who needed help.

Things played out differently at Cali's Torres del Limonar, a five-story residential block in a quiet southern neighborhood of Colombia's third-largest city.

Neighbors and volunteers who pulled some 20 people from the rubble in the first hours were quickly backed up by local firefighters and then joined by more than a dozen official entities, including police and navy rescuers and search and rescue officials from other cities.

Within two days the site was strictly organized, with volunteers allowed only certain jobs in an effort to avoid overcrowding and let rescuers listen for survivors. A constant rotation of dump trucks removed rubble in the shadow of two cranes.

Police forensic staff were in charge of body removal, using metal litters and specialized vehicles.

Humanitarian workers in Colombia, many of whom had only recently returned from Venezuela, praised the efficient, local-level organization in Colombia that helped get heavy machinery to many places, but expressed concern about isolated parts of the country, particularly the coastal Pacific province of Choco.

In Choco, Colombia's poorest province, there were 13 deaths in the quake, with no people registered as missing. However, it already had wide humanitarian needs after decades of state neglect and armed violence, which may be worsened by the quake, the aid workers said.

Global Guardian, a Virginia-based private security firm, whose staff helped relocate or support oil, gas and financial sector employees in both countries after the quakes, told Reuters it had a far smoother experience in Colombia than in Venezuela.

There was no access to heavy machinery when his staff arrived in Venezuela, said Tomas Michael Carvallo, senior intelligence analyst at the firm.

"A lot of the immediate search and rescue efforts fell to civilians who were really not equipped to move concrete and collapsed buildings," he said.

The earthquakes struck during important political developments in both countries.

In Venezuela, Washington's capture of President Nicolas Maduro in January has ushered in a rapprochement with the Trump administration, under the leadership of Rodriguez, Maduro's former vice-president. The top U.S. diplomat in Caracas has not directly addressed criticisms of the Venezuelan government's response to the quake, saying only that Venezuela has complied with requests to advance the humanitarian response.

For Colombia's new right-wing president, Abelardo De La Espriella, the quake has been an early challenge. De La Espriella, who has promised tougher security and austerity measures, was sworn in as the country's new president only three days before the disaster.

Having blasted his predecessor for overspending, De La Espriella is now reviewing a more than $180 billion budget for 2027, even as he pledges emergency funds for the thousands who lost homes and businesses.

An effective response could help De La Espriella shore up support in regions that opposed him, said Tiziano Breda, senior Latin America and Caribbean analyst at conflict monitoring group ACLED.

In Venezuela, "local-level mismanagement is yet more proof of institutional deterioration," Breda said.

Venezuelan authorities arrested four police for alleged looting after the quake, and a video on social media showed locals yelling at an official who was holding U.S. dollars found in the rubble. Another video showed heavy machinery standing idle due to lack of fuel. Breda said the acting government may now have an improved chance of making progress in its long-running battle to recover some $4 billion in gold bullion held by the Bank of England, which Caracas has tied to reconstruction efforts.

"It will take many years to return a sense of stability to the two countries, particularly for the children," World Vision coordinator Mayerly Sanchez said. "The emergency has barely begun."